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ABSTRACT

A study of the type and extent of learner participation in the instructional and management aspects of adult literacy education is reported. The literature on learner participation is reviewed, and three purposes for active learner participation are discussed: efficiency, personal development, and social change. The results of a national survey of literacy programs in the United States are then presented. Survey results found that in instruction, learners are in some cases actively involved in planning, evaluation, peer teaching, reading and writing instruction, field trips, and artistic activities. In management, learners are taking leadership roles in public awareness and advocacy, governance, learner recruitment, mutual support, conferences, community development, program staffing, income generation, and staff recruitment and training. Findings from the survey and interviews suggest that this interest is evident across the field of adult literacy education, particularly within community-based and volunteer programs. Intensive case studies describing participatory activities in two volunteer programs, two minority-language programs, and two programs for low-income women are offered. The origins, limitations, strengths, and critical conditions for participatory efforts are analyzed, and recommendations for improving and expanding use of participatory practices are made. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Jurmo, Paul Joseph, Ed.D.

University of Massachusetts, 1987

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4

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LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES
IN ADULT LITERACY EFFORTS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation Presented

by

PAUL JOSEPH JURMO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1987

Education

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by

PAUL JOSEPH JURMO

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George Urch, Acting Dean
School of Education

To my family and friends
who make this all worthwhile.

PREFACE

Do you remember when you were a child and, for one reason or another, you were not allowed to be part of the group? Maybe you were too small, too young, too shy, the wrong color, the wrong height, a new kid on the block, not fast enough, not cool enough, or from the wrong neighborhood. Or maybe you had a strange last name or talked funny. Whatever the reason, you wanted to participate, but couldn't, and you felt bad.

But remember when you were part of a group effort, when your playmates, or a kind adult, let you in? Remember how you felt: more involved, happy, energetic, and confident -- and less alone.

These, I think, are the feelings that are at the root of the interest being shown in having learners in active, participatory roles in adult literacy programs. I've learned the value of participatory education in my work experience in literacy efforts in West Africa and the United States. The Center for International Education also gave me the opportunity to learn about a participatory approach from the inside -- as a student in a participatory graduate program.

I want to thank the many people who, in the spirit of participatory research, shared their valuable experiences and insights with me and contributed so much to this study.

These include the nearly one hundred informants (listed in Appendices IV and VI) who participated in the interviews which serve as the foundation of the study.

My thanks also go both to to the Association for Community Based Education which through a minigrant covered many of the study's research costs, and to Bronx Educational Services which served as fiscal agent for the grant. I give my thanks and affection to my colleagues at the Business Council for Effective Literacy, who assisted me with a flexible work schedule, access to invaluable reference materials, and a great deal of moral support.

I of course owe a great deal to David Kinsey, who as chair of my dissertation committee has given me valuable guidance for several years. My other committee members, David Evans and Peter Park, likewise provided assistance for which I am very grateful. Also to be thanked are David Kahler and Judy Solsken who served as outside readers.

And, last but far from least, are all the wonderful members of my family -- especially Tati and Nikki -- whose love and support have really made this work not only possible but worthwhile.

ABSTRACT

Learner Participation Practices in Adult Literacy Efforts in the United States

September 1987

Paul Joseph Jurmo

B.A., University of Michigan
M.Ed., Boston University
Ed.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Professor David C. Kinsey

Current efforts to expand adult literacy services in the United States too often merely replicate past ineffective practices and fail to make use of alternative instructional and management approaches available to them. Learner participation practices are one such potentially useful tool. In them, learners are intentionally encouraged to take greater control and responsibility in the running of program activities.

Not enough is known at present about the purposes, origins, forms, users, supportive or hindering factors, and outcomes of these practices as they have been developed to date. While there is evidence that the field has a growing interest in participatory approaches, only limited information and analysis have been developed to guide those hoping to improve and expand the use of these practices.

To begin to fill in these gaps in knowledge, this study initially reviews the literature on participation and discusses three purposes for active learner participation:

"efficiency," "personal development," and "social change." It then presents the results of a national survey of participatory practices in the instructional and management components of U.S. literacy programs. In instruction, learners are in some cases actively involved in planning, evaluation, peer-teaching, writing and reading practices, field trips, and artistic activities. In management, learners are taking leadership roles in public awareness and advocacy, governance, learner recruitment and intake, mutual support, conferences, community development, program staffing, income generation, and staff recruitment and training. Built on documents and interviews, the survey reveals that this interest is evident across the field, particularly within community based and volunteer programs.

Next, intensive case studies describe participatory activities in two volunteer programs, two minority-language programs, and two programs for low-income women. These cases and the national survey provide the basis for an analysis of the origins, limitations, strengths, and critical conditions related to participatory efforts. Finally, the study recommends actions aimed at improving and expanding the use of these practices. These actions include building a deeper understanding of participatory literacy education, research and training, and expansion of the material and human resources needed to make these practices work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.. v
ABSTRACT... vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.................................... ix

Chapter
I. WHY FOCUS ON LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES?.... 1

- The Problem...................................... 1
- Purpose of the Study............................. 13
- Significance and Audience........................ 15
- Definition of Terms.............................. 16
- Research Methods................................. 18
  - Step 1: Review of Literature................... 18
  - Step 2: Gathering of Data from National Sources.............................. 19
  - Step 3: Gathering of Data from Local Level Programs......................... 22
  - Step 4: Preparation of Analysis of Data Gathered in Previous Steps........... 25
    - Origins.................................... 25
    - Limitations and Strengths.................. 25
    - Key Issues to Be Considered................ 26
- Conclusion....................................... 26

II. THREE PURPOSES FOR LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES...................................... 31

- "Participation" Defined.......................... 31
- Three Purposes for Learner Participation......... 32
- Learner Participation in Instruction............. 34
  - Purpose #1: "Efficiency"....................... 34
  - Purpose #2: "Personal Development"............. 39
  - Purpose #3: "Social Change".................... 48
- Learner Participation in Management.............. 56
  - Purposes #1 and 2: "Efficiency" and "Personal Development"......................... 56
  - Purpose #3: "Social Change".................... 63
- Summary and Conclusion........................... 67

III. LEARNER PARTICIPATION: AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR IDEA IN THE U.S. LITERACY FIELD.................. 76

- Section I: The Make-Up of the Adult Literacy Field in the United States.............. 77
  - The Learners................................... 77
  - The Literacy Providers......................... 78
    - Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs......... 79
    - Volunteer Programs........................... 80

Community Based Organizations.................. 81
Colleges and Universities...................... 83
Employee Programs.............................. 84
Correctional Institutions...................... 89
Minority Language Programs..................... 90
Libraries...................................... 91
Religious Organizations........................ 92
Military Programs.............................. 93
Services for the Disabled...................... 94
Proprietary Programs........................... 96
The Support Organizations...................... 97
Planning and Coordination...................... 97
Funding and In-Kind Assistance................. 99
Research....................................... 100
Training....................................... 101
Instructional Materials........................ 102
Section II: Forms of Learner Participation Practices............................ 103
Participatory Practices Within the Instructional Component......................... 103
Planning and Evaluation of Instruction......... 104
Planning of Instruction........................ 104
Evaluation of Instruction...................... 110
Implementation of Instruction.................. 112
Learners as Teachers........................... 112
Learners as Writers............................ 116
Newsletters.................................... 116
Letter-Writing................................. 119
Writers' Workshops............................. 120
Writing Awards................................. 121
Use of Word Processors......................... 122
Writing of Functional Texts.................... 124
Participatory Reading Activities............... 124
Field Trips.................................... 126
Learners as Artists............................ 127
Drawing.. 127
Role-Playing................................... 128
Photo and Video Presentations.................. 129
Participatory Practices Within the Management Component........................... 129
Public Awareness and Advocacy.................. 130
Public Awareness............................... 131
Advocacy....................................... 132
Program Governance............................. 134
Boards of Directors............................ 134
Student Advisory Councils...................... 135
Learner Recruitment and Intake................. 136
Recruitment.................................... 136
Intake... 137
Learner Support Activities..................... 138
Support Groups................................. 139
Recognition Events............................. 140

Social Activities........................ 141
Conferences.............................. 142
Community Development.................... 143
Program Staffing......................... 145
Income Generation........................ 146
Staff Recruitment and Training........... 149
Staff Recruitment........................ 149
Staff Training........................... 149
Section III: The Extent of Use of Participatory Practices............................ 150
Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs........... 150
Volunteer Programs.............................. 152
Laubach Literacy Action (LLA)................ 152
Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)......... 156
Other Volunteer Organizations................ 159
Community Based Organizations................. 160
Colleges and Universities...................... 162
Employee Programs.............................. 162
Correctional Institutions...................... 165
Minority Language Programs..................... 167
Libraries...................................... 170
Religious Organizations........................ 170
Military Programs.............................. 172
Services for the Disabled and Proprietary Programs........................... 172
Summary and Conclusion.......................... 172

IV. CASE STUDIES OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES.. 194

Literacy Volunteers of New York City........... 195
General Description of Program............... 195
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 195
Instructional Practices...................... 196
Management Practices......................... 208
Program Governance......................... 210
Advocacy and Fundraising................... 212
Learner Recruitment and Intake............. 213
Staff Recruitment and Training............. 214
Support Activities......................... 215
Evaluation................................. 215
Conferences................................ 216
The Center for Literacy........................ 217
General Description of Program............... 217
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 218
Instructional Practices...................... 220
Planning and Evaluation.................... 220
Implementation............................. 224
Student Reading Groups................... 224
Student Writing.......................... 226
Management Practices......................... 229
Student Support Groups..................... 229

Recognition Events........................ 230
Public Awareness.......................... 231
Student Recruitment and Retention.......... 232
Program Governance........................ 233
Program Staffing.......................... 234
Staff Training............................ 235
Conferences............................... 236
Union Settlement House........................ 237
General Description of Program............... 237
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 237
Instructional Practices...................... 241
Management Practices......................... 247
Program Governance........................ 247
Staff Recruitment and Supervision.......... 248
Student Recruitment....................... 249
Social Activities......................... 249
Fundraising............................... 250
Field Trips............................... 250
Public Awareness and Advocacy.............. 250
Community Language Services (of LaGuardia Community College).............. 251
General Description of Program............... 251
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 251
Instructional Practices...................... 253
Management Practices......................... 260
Recognition Events and Social Activities......................... 260
Advocacy.................................. 260
Program Staffing.......................... 261
Staff Training............................ 261
Lutheran Settlement House..................... 262
General Description of Program............... 262
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 263
Instructional Practices...................... 266
Management Practices......................... 271
Program Governance........................ 271
Program Staffing.......................... 272
Fundraising............................... 272
Public Awareness and Advocacy.............. 273
Social Activities......................... 274
American Reading Council...................... 275
General Description of Program............... 275
Overview of Participatory Practices.......... 276
Instructional Practices...................... 279
Management Practices......................... 286
Public Awareness and Advocacy.............. 287
Student Recruitment and Retention.......... 287
Field Trips............................... 288
Program Staffing.......................... 288
Summary and Conclusion........................ 288

V. ORIGINS, LIMITATIONS, AND STRENGTHS OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES.............. 293

Origins.. 293
Theoretical Models............................... 294
Program Models................................... 295
Institutional Influences......................... 295
Practical Experience............................. 296
Limitations...................................... 298
Opportunity Costs................................ 299
Loss of Confidentiality.......................... 299
Perceived Manipulation of Learners............... 301
Perceived Threats to Traditional Power Structures.. 302
Difficulties in Assessing Results................ 304
Disappointment Resulting from Unmet Expectations...................................... 305
Limited Technical Quality of Learners' Work.................................... 307
Adulteration of Learner Participation Theory............................. 308
Confusion over Purposes and Means of Learner Participation............................. 309
Strengths.. 311
Improved Morale of Learners, Staff, and Others....................................... 312
Improved Academic Skills for Learners............ 312
Improved Non-Academic Skills for Learners.. 313
Increased Learner Interest in "Lifelong Learning"............................... 314
Increased "Community Mindedness"................. 314
Increased Political Awareness and Activism... 315
Increased Opportunities for Staff Development...................................... 317
Improvements in Program Management............... 318
Positive Support from Funding Sources............ 319
Summary and Conclusion........................... 319

VI. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: A SYNTHESIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIELD.............. 326

Develop a New Theory of Learner Participation.................................... 326
Consider the Key Issues Emerging from the Learner Participation Experience to Date.... 332
Confidentiality.................................. 332
Manipulation..................................... 333
Leadership....................................... 336
Support Needs.................................... 338
Commitment....................................... 340

Accountability........................... 342
Power Relationships........................ 344
Be Prepared to Deal with External Constraints........................... 348
Political Constraints........................ 349
Cultural Constraints........................ 349
Bureaucratic Constraints........................ 350
Economic Constraints........................ 353
Institute an Ongoing Research and Development System........................ 354
Clarify Research and Development Needs........ 355
Document Existing Theory and Practice........ 355
Disseminate Research Findings................ 357
Institute a Training and Networking System..... 358
Be Prepared to Deal with Internal Program Needs........................... 362
Develop a Base of Material and Human Resources........................... 365
Summary and Conclusion........................ 369

APPENDICES

A. Methodology Used for Literature Review (Chapter II)........................... 376
B. Methodology Used for National Survey (Chapter III)........................... 383
C. Newsletters, Conferences and Workshops, Recordings, and Other Sources Cited in National Survey (Chapter III).................. 390
D. Interviews Conducted for National Survey (Chapter III)........................... 394
E. Interview Guide Used in National Survey (Chapter III) and Case Studies (Chapter IV)..... 399
F. Interviews Conducted for Case Studies (Chapter IV)........................... 401
G. Methodology Used for Case Studies (Chapter IV)........................... 403
H. Methodology Used for Analyses of Origins, Limitations, Strengths, and Key Issues (Chapters V and VI)........................... 411
BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES CITED........................... 414

CHAPTER I

WHY FOCUS ON LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES?

The Problem

Public attention in the United States has, since the launching of a nationwide multi-media adult literacy awareness campaign in late 1984, increasingly been directed toward the problem of adult illiteracy. Currently, various adult literacy awareness campaigns are underway at national, state, and local levels. Coalitions of parties concerned about the illiteracy problem have been formed at these levels, as well. The literacy field is reaching out for support both from volunteers and from public and private sector funding sources. New reports, and an updated version of a key national reference on the literacy problem, have been issued in the past few years, and they have been used as fuel in the growing discussion around the literacy issue.

In response to these appeals, public policy makers and private sector funders have put illiteracy on their agendas and, in some cases, have alloted new funds to the literacy field. Volunteers are signing up to serve as tutors, and prospective students are coming forward looking for help.

Since 1984, major developments in the field have included: (1) creation of a national Coalition for Literacy and equivalent state and local-level coalitions; (2) establishment of a federal Adult Literacy Initiative; (3)

increases in business sector involvement; (4) public awareness activities at the national level, which include a three-year multi-media campaign being conducted by the Coalition for Literacy, a two-year joint community outreach project organized by the ABC and PBS television networks, and special literacy awareness efforts by the print media; (5) publication of literacy reports by the National Adult Literacy Project, the Business Council for Effective Literacy, B.Dalton Bookseller, the Association for Community Based Education, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, David Harman and Carman St. John Hunter, Jonathan Kozol, and others; (6) efforts to expand public sector support via the U.S. Congress, state legislatures, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Education Commission of the States,and others; and (7) research and development in the uses of computers and television for literacy.

The adult literacy field, a conglomeration of government-funded agencies, volunteer groups, grassroots community programs, and others, is responding to these new demands and opportunities by not only reaching out to external resources for assistance but working within and among themselves to improve their own operations. Improvements and expansions are being planned and implemented in instructional and program management practices. Computer and video technologies are being enlisted as new tools in these efforts, and such relatively new resources as college students, senior citizens, and staffs of business, professional, and governmental bodies are being called on to carry out emerging literacy projects.

Within this flurry of activities, there is a strong tendency to replicate what has gone on before. This tendency is due, in part, to time pressure: as demand for services increases and resources remain inadequate, there is little time for a program to experiment with new methods of instruction or management. In some cases, "things remain the same" due to staff's lack of familiarity with alternative instructional and management practices. In some cases, program staff simply have a conscious or unconscious vested interest in maintaining current familiar practices, as adoption of new practices might be viewed as an admission that past practices with which the program is identified have in some way been inadequate.

Several recent influential studies of "what is needed" in the field cite the need to pay attention to the lessons produced by the field to date: The National Adult Literacy Project emphasizes that "the validation and packaging of model programs" and "the creation of a technical assistance system to help programs adapt model systems to local needs and preferences" are "critical to the success" of the national system of service providers.[1]

B.Dalton Bookseller's Guidelines for Effective Adult Literacy Programs argues that current literacy efforts tend to "focus on the numbers" of illiterates, programs, students, and volunteers. This concern with numbers ignores the more important question of effectiveness of current efforts, as measured by how responsive programs are to specific learner needs, whether volunteers and paid staff are receiving the training and support they need, and other key indicators of a program's value.[2]

David Harman's Turning Illiteracy Around: An Agenda for National Action claims that the literacy field at present has "no systemwide mechanisms for research and development and hence no mechanisms for improving practice other than the anecdotal and impressionistic modes that have come to typify the field."[3] As a short-term solution, Harman recommends that "currently-available knowledge, experience, and expertise" be organized in a practical and accessible way, with a special focus on the issues of how adult illiterates of various backgrounds learn and what curricula and teaching methods now exist. "This compendium could be assembled in a relatively short time and serve as a guide to people who are designing programs. A companion guide would deal with organization and administrative aspects of program delivery."[4]

A less widely circulated but nonetheless valuable report by Miriam Balmuth, Essential Characteristics of

Effective Adult Literacy Programs: A Review of the Research, makes similar arguments on the need for dissemination of information on effective literacy practices. She claims that within the literacy field there has been "little opportunity to learn from the experience of others. . . . Fragmentation and lack of communication among programs, and even within them, had been the rule." She attributes these problems to the fact that literacy practitioners tend to have learned their skills "on the job, with little or no formal training in literacy or adult education." This lack of appropriate training has been further compounded by the fact that many practitioners work only on a part-time basis, dividing their time between two or more programs. And to further complicate this situation, "funding patterns allowed for little formal exchanges among program staff, and institutional affiliations sometimes made exchanges among programs difficult to organize."[8]

Thus, in the rush to expand existing literacy services and to establish new ones, the need to learn from past experience is often overlooked. This too often results in programs replicating past ineffective practices and failing to make use of positive, useful experiences.

As seen in other recent reports, there is a growing sense that programs need to get students out of traditional, passive roles and into new, more active roles within literacy efforts. The principle of learner participation is being implemented in both the instructional component and the management component of literacy programs. In this case, learner participation is defined as the intentional involving of the learner in the operation of one or more components of a literacy effort.

The International Council for Adult Education, in The World of Literacy: Policy, Research, and Action, identified four "general principles or conditions that are most likely to ensure achievement and retention of literacy." One of these principles, that of "popular participation," was defined as follows:

> The participation of people in determining the content, levels of competence, and methods of learning should be part of national development strategies, which themselves should derive from a popular base.[6]

The Association for Community Based Education (ACBE) argues that both international and domestic literacy experience point to the validity of "learner-centered approaches" which involve learners in "analyzing the environment, identifying problems, and making decisions" about the course of their education. "Learner participation" should be encouraged in all aspects of program design and implementation. ACBE claims that

> such programs have proven successful in less developed countries. But in our own country, with our own disadvantaged learners (in many ways a set of "less developed" rural and urban subcultures within our own borders), the dominant educational model draws on little of this experience and knowledge. Instead, we provide literacy education divorced from its social and economic context, a

kind of "literacy in a vacuum."[7]

Carman St. John Hunter and David Harman, in their *Adult Illiteracy in the United States*, recommend the creation of "new, pluralistic, community-based initiatives . . . (which) would focus on persons *in* the communities where they live." These efforts would be based on the premise that adult learners themselves would "contribute to designing programs based on concrete learning needs growing out of specific issues affecting their lives in their communities."[8]

In *A Look at Illiteracy in America Today -- The Problem, The Solutions, The Alternatives*, Michael Fox calls for a "learner-centered approach" which "is participatory rather than didactic, eclectic rather than pre-programmed." In this approach, learners are to be centrally involved in making decisions, teaching and helping fellow learners, developing goals and appropriate strategies which would help them to "know and understand *their* world." The practitioner is in this process more a partner than a teacher in the traditional sense, a partner who provides learners with "materials that help them get where they they want to go."[9]

The widely-circulated newsletter of the Business Council for Effective Literacy stresses that community-based organizations are particularly effective as literacy-providing agencies because community-based programs focus "on what the participants themselves deem to be important to their own lives rather than on a standard course of study based on externally-imposed criteria and values." Within community-based programs, instructions are carried out in a style which is "highly participatory . . . usually (in) a peer-group process involving discussion of issues, debates, creation of stories, and self-generated materials."[10]

Guidelines for Effective Adult Literacy Programs states that, as a means of providing "consistent support" to learners, literacy programs should establish mechanisms by which learners could be encouraged to participate "in all phases of program planning and operations, wherever possible." [11]

In Where Stands the Republic? Illiteracy: A Warning and a Challenge to the Nation's Press, Jonathan Kozol holds that literacy efforts should emphasize "grass-roots programs which are done not 'for' but 'with' the people whom we plan to serve." His criteria for defining such a program focus on three questions: (1) Who decides the goals and structure of recruitment and instruction activities? (2) Who does the actual recruiting and what tone does the recruiting take? and (3) In what types of settings do recruitment and instruction occur? In all three areas, Kozol holds that current and potential students should play an active role.[12]

Motivated by such sentiments, programs have developed activities which aim at getting learners beyond the relatively passive roles of "tokenism" and "cooperating," as defined, respectively, by Arnstein[13] and Comings.[14]

Instead, learners are being placed in positions in which they can exercise something more like the "control" and sharing in the decision-making, implementation of activities, benefits, and evaluation associated with the program, which are defined, respectively, by Arnstein[15] and Cohen and Uphoff.[16]

These participatory practices are currently being implemented in a variety of activities within the "instructional" and "management" (i.e., defined here as virtually all other program activities not normally seen as "instructional" in nature) components of literacy programs, both in the United States and in other countries.[17]

This intentional, active involving of learners in program activities is being done for a variety of purposes. For the purposes of this study, we have borrowed from educational perspectives identified by Arnstein,[18] Cohen and Uphoff,[19] Kidd and Kumar,[20] Srinivasan,[21] Paulston,[22] Fingeret,[23] and Ilsley,[24] and broken these rationales for learner participation into "efficiency," "personal development," and "social change" categories, according to the purposes which the learner participation is to achieve. Briefly stated, the "efficiency" argument holds that by intentionally involving learners in the running of program activities, a program's technical efficiency stands to benefit in a number of ways. Learners, for example, tend to become more interested in and committed to the program and thereby more fully support what the program is trying to accomplish. The "personal development" rationale supports an active role for the learner on the grounds that it will develop positive personal traits and skills in the learner which will enhance the overall character and life of the learner. According to those arguing for learner participation on the grounds of "social change," learners can, through taking control of their own educational situation, learn attitudes and skills which will enable them to work to change the larger social conditions which otherwise tend to limit them to inferior social and economic roles. This learner participation theory and practice is summarized in more detail in Chapter II.

In the reports cited above and in the learner participation literature cited in Chapter II, we see evidence of a real interest in involving learners in active, non-traditional ways within literacy program and other social-action settings. In newsletters from local, state, and national-level programs, and in conferences and public awareness activities carried out by those organizations, there is likewise clear evidence that these principles and models of learner participation are being tried out in imaginative ways, across the whole range of types of literacy programs. Participatory activities are being developed at the program level and by literacy organizations operating at the community, city, state, regional, and national levels. No longer are participatory practices the sole property of the relatively politicized "community-based organizations" which have historically been kept at the fringe of the literacy field; these practices have now entered the "mainstream" as well. For example, Laubach Literacy Action has instituted a national student newsletter, Literacy Volunteers of America has set up a fund for student activities, and literacy students will be appearing on regular adult literacy "Learner of the Month" public awareness segments on the ABC television network. While learners' roles in these particular activities have been relatively limited to date, they are, at the national level, an indication of a larger growing interest in this notion of student involvement and leadership.

Learners are in some cases being encouraged to become actively involved in exercising greater control of what is normally thought of as the core of literacy efforts, the instructional process. Learners are being called on to help in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of instructional activities. In most of the "other stuff" that goes on in literacy programs (everything from recruiting of learners, to training of staff, to counseling of learners, to developing community relations, to participating on boards of directors, to organizing social activities, and more) learners are likewise being asked to play relatively new, active roles. These practices are being implemented for the variety of purposes cited above, purposes which range from increasing of program "efficiency," to helping the learner's "personal development," to promotion of "social change". In some cases, practitioners are implementing these practices because learner participation -- which is termed "student involvement" by some programs -- has become the trendy "thing to do."

Despite this apparent growth in interest in the learner participation concept, those interested in developing these new roles for learners are limited by a lack of basic information and analysis of the participatory practices which are being developed. For most actual or potential supporters of the notion of learner participation, the origins, purposes, nature, extent, limitations, strengths, and key issues of the practices are at best only sketchily known. Information of this type is still not widely available due to, among other things, a lack of adequate resources within the literacy field for information collection and exchange. The little information which is available is largely limited to reports from isolated programs which are often written in an uncritical way, with inadequate analysis of the limitations, strengths, and key issues of the practices described. Little effort has been made to tie even these isolated reports together in any systematic way.

Given this lack of comprehensive information and analysis related to the learner participation concept, practitioners already using learner participation practices are often not fully aware of the range of rationales and the considerable corresponding work which could be used in support of their efforts. These practitioners thus tend to be continually "re-inventing the wheel," not learning from others' -- or their own -- experience. At the same time, those programs which do try to actively involve learners are at times handicapped by a certain naivete about what can be realistically achieved by using the learner participation concept. And apart from those programs already convinced of the worth of more active roles for learners, many other literacy programs are currently being planned "in the dark," with little or no consideration of the contribution which active learner involvement could play in the programs.

Purpose of the Study

There is thus at present a general lack of information available about literacy program practices which aim at providing learners with a greater share of the programs' responsibilities and rewards. Not only is there this lack of basic information but an inadequate analysis of those practices, particularly as they relate to existing arguments for learner participation. Current attempts to implement participatory practices are burdened by these gaps in existing information and analysis.

Given these gaps in information and analysis, this study more clearly quantifies what learner participation practices are at present being implemented and in what contexts. It also presents hypotheses on apparent origins, limitations, strengths, and key issues central to further development of those practices. This is accomplished through a literature review, a national suggestive survey, and a series of case studies of programs currently implementing participatory activities.

The study attempts to answer the following primary question: "What are the purposes and patterns of applying the principle of learner participation in U.S. adult literacy efforts, and what appear to be origins, limitations, strengths, and key issues involved in using learner participation practices in various program components?"

With the above primary question as an overall frame of reference, the study answers the following five more specific implementing questions:

> 1. What purposes can be served by the use of participatory practices in adult literacy programs?
>
> 2. In what forms -- and to what extent -- are learner participation practices currently in use in the U.S. adult literacy field?
>
> 3. In selected literacy programs using learner participation practices, what are the origins, purposes, nature, and outcomes of those practices?

4. What appear to be the origins, limitations, and strengths of these practices as they are being used nationwide?

5. What key issues need to be considered for further development of learner participation practices in U.S. literacy efforts?

Significance and Audience

The study attempts to fill in the considerable gaps currently existing in information and analysis available on the application of the learner participation concept in the U.S. adult literacy field. It supplements the most widely disseminated reports now available, providing not only basic information on the nature and extent of existing practices, but also a preliminary identification of critical issues and hypotheses on apparent origins, limitations, and strengths of those practices.

The study has been written primarily for planners and practitioners in U.S. adult literacy efforts, for an emerging body of students taking leadership roles within adult literacy programs, and for those scholars generally interested in the concept of participation. This audience includes not only those already committed to the learner participation principle, but those not-yet-committed investigators who are open to consideration of new approaches for adaptation to existing, and new, programs. The audience for the study might also include public- and private-sector funding sources who wish to more fully explore the implications of supporting programs which use learner participation practices. While the above audience would likely consist primarily of those interested in the U.S. adult literacy field, it might also include individuals associated with literacy and other efforts outside the United States who have similar interests in exploring the learner participation idea.

Definition of Terms

Several key terms used in this study need to be clarified. Borrowing from Harman's and Hunter's definition,[35] "literacy" and "basic skills" are here defined as the ability to use written language to achieve objectives of personal meaning to the individual. "Adult learner" (also termed "student" or "participant") is defined as an individual 16 years old or older and not enrolled in a formal school, who is attempting to improve his or her literacy skills.

The term "learner participation principle" (or "concept") refers to a basic belief that learners should take an active, controlling role in the educational activities in which they are involved. A "learner participation practice" (or "participatory practice" or "activity") is an involving of a learner in the active planning or implementation of an educational activity. This participatory approach is contrasted with a "programmed learning" approach which relies more on curricula and management structures defined and controlled by teachers and program administrators.

"Instructional component" refers to those aspects of an educational program which consist of the planning and implementation of activities specifically designed to fulfill identified learning objectives. The "management component" is, in turn, those aspects of an educational program which provide a physical and organizational context within which instructional activities are carried out.

As used in Chapter V, the terms "origins," "strengths," and "limitations" have particular meanings. "Origins" refer to the range of theoretical influences, program models, institutional influences, and personal and work experiences which have led to the development of learner participation practices. "Strengths" are outcomes of participatory activities which are considered to be positive by those involved in the activities. Conversely, "limitations" are the activity outcomes deemed to be in some way problematic or less than positive.

The term "theory," seen particularly in Chapter VI, is used not in the specific sense of a scientifically tested and proven hypothesis. Rather, it is used in the more general sense of a "hypothesis (or interpretation of a phenomenon) assumed for the sake of argument or investigation."[28]

Research Methods

The methodology used in this study consisted of a combination of data-gathering activities and a critical analysis of the data. The data gathering was accomplished through (1) an analytical review of literature on purposes, forms, patterns, and issues of learner participation practices; (2) interviews and document reviews related to national and local level literacy efforts; and (3) interviews, observations, and document reviews for case studies for six literacy programs in the mid-Atlantic region. These data-gathering activities in turn provided a basis for the identification and analysis of origins, limitations, strengths, and key issues emerging from efforts to implement learner participation practices in U.S. literacy programs. This methodology is broken down into four steps which are described below.

Step 1: Review of Literature

The first step in this process consisted of a review of literature defining the purposes which learner participation practices can achieve in adult literacy efforts both within and outside the United States. This literature was made up of theoretical works, position papers, and reports from actual programs. These sources were identified through a combination of an ERIC computer search, a library search, review of references collected in graduate courses in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, reviews of bibliographies, and interviews with practitioners and researchers in the literacy field who are familiar with the concept of learner participation. The identified sources were organized according to the purposes which they see learner participation playing in the instructional and management component of adult literacy programs.[27]

Step 2: Gathering of Data from National Sources

Step 2 was divided into three phases which aimed at gathering data necessary to present a general picture of the extent to which learner participation practices are currently being implemented in U.S. literacy efforts. In the first phase, data were gathered from national sources[28] to develop an overview of the adult literacy student population and of the categories of adult-literacy-providing organizations currently in operation in this country. Each category of providers was profiled, including government-funded Adult Basic Education programs, voluntary organizations, community-based organizations, and nine other categories. In addition, an overview was prepared of the various types of support organizations which provide the above literacy providers with training, materials, and other needed resources. This overview of the U.S. literacy field was based on information gathered primarily from written reports and sample materials available from the various national literacy organizations and from other general reports about the literacy field. The resulting information is fairly unique in that it describes in some detail all categories of literacy providers, including some, like employee programs, not commonly included in similar available surveys.

The second phase of Step 2 consisted of gathering of information from national, state, and local sources for the purpose of identifying in some detail the types of learner participation practices which are the focus of this study. Sources of this information initially consisted of written reports issued by literacy organizations, many of which were in newsletter form.[29] Subsequent sources were the interviews conducted with nearly fifty representatives of national and local literacy programs.[30] Data were also gathered through observation of presentations made at various national (and other) literacy conferences and in televised news coverage of the literacy field.[31] From these data, each type of known learner participation practice was described in some detail. These practices were in turn organized under "instructional" or "management" headings. The resulting listing of types of learner participation practices is unique in its comprehensiveness, as there appears to be little effort underway elsewhere to tie the range of learner participation efforts together in even so rudimentary a way as development of a simple listing of this type.

The third phase of Step 2 consisted of preparation of a "suggestive survey" of the major literacy-providing organizations identified in phase 1 above. This survey aimed at identifying, first, the extent to which the learner participation practices identified in phase 2 are currently being used and, second, the rationales behind those practices. Data for this phase were gathered through interviews with authorities on the various organizations active in the literacy field[38] and through reviews of documents issued about those organizations. Fifty informants were interviewed under this step, either by telephone or in person. For each segment of the field, interviews were conducted with one or more spokespersons identified by the major literacy organizations as knowledgeable about instructional and management practices within that segment. Typically these informants were high-level officers of the national literacy organizations or directors of individual programs within those organizations identified by the national-level staff.

This survey is termed "suggestive" primarily due to the fact that this notion of learner participation practices is a relatively unfamiliar one within the literacy field. As a result, systematic records are not kept to determine who is using these practices, with what frequency, with what result, and with what purpose. The data which are available contain gaps and tend to be anecdotal in nature. It is felt that such a survey is nonetheless useful not only because it clarifies the larger context within which the practices are being implemented, but because it provides interested planners and practitioners with a clearer picture of where like-minded practitioners exist. Those with an interest in the learner participation concept might thereby be better able to share information and further develop these practices.

Step 3: Gathering of Data from Local Level Programs

In this step, case studies were prepared of six literacy programs in which learner participation practices are being implemented. The programs were selected according to four criteria. Under the first, programs were chosen so that the final selection of cases represented a rough cross section of the types of literacy programs identified in Step 2. The cases were so selected in order to allow for an assessment of the applicability of learner participation practices in a variety of program settings.

A second criterion for selection was the extent to which learner participation practices had been implemented in the program to date. That is, each program was to be seen as a "model" example of one or more learner participation practices. They were "model" in the sense that the practices in question had been in operation for a significant amount of time and had been fairly successful in achieving their intended goals. This focusing on "model" efforts was intended as a means of producing a richness and depth of data not as likely to be found in programs with only a brief history of involvement with participatory activities.

A third criterion for program selection was the perspective which program staff had on the learner participation practice(s) being used. That is, it was hoped that some of the staff to be interviewed would hold an "efficiency" perspective, some a "personal development" perspective, and some a "social change" perspective vis-a-vis their use of learner participation. In so selecting the staff members to be interviewed, a cross section of the rationales identified in Step 1 was presented, again for the sake of providing a breadth of data.

Relative accessibility was a fourth criterion upon which programs were selected. Programs had to be physically accessible to the researcher, within relatively easy commuting distance from his New York City base. Each program staff member had to also have the willingness and time to allow the researcher to spend a minimum of four hours interviewing program staff and learners.

Once, according to the above criteria, a program was selected for investigation, the researcher then gathered data primarily through interviews[23] and reviews of program documents. The interviews were conducted with a minimum of two staff members and two learners, normally in separate sessions to assure a sense of confidentiality, trust, and honest assessment of the programs from a variety of perpectives. Documents examined included not only program policy statements and internal and external reports, but news clippings, videotapes, instructional materials, and learner-produced materials. These learner materials included newsletters, creative and expository writing, and letters to policy makers. In addition to gathering data through interviews and document reviews, the researcher also conducted observations of program activities in operation, wherever possible.

The data gathered for each case were then presented in four sections.[24] In the first, a general description was presented of the program's history, purposes, population served, funding sources, and administrative structure. This was followed by an overview of the participatory practices to be examined, including descriptions of the origins and types of learner participation practices being used in the program. Next came more-detailed descriptions and analyses of the participatory practices being used in the program's instructional component and, then, of those practices being used in the program's management component.

The data for each of the cases were presented in a narrative format, including brief anecdotal descriptions of particular practices, persons involved, and related factors. With this narrative format, the data presented were to be rich and compelling, triggering recollections and spin-off ideas in the mind of the reader. The data were summarized in a more quantified way in the following step.

Step 4: Preparation of Analysis of Data Gathered in Previous Steps

In this final step, the findings of the previous three steps were summarized and analyzed, as follows:[38]

Origins

The theoretical, programmatic, institutional, and practical influences which have shaped the practices currently in use were summarized.

Limitations and strengths

The first three steps had provided information on (1) what theoretically should happen when learners are put into active roles in the learning process; (2) how literacy programs are in fact trying to implement participatory practices; and (3) the outcomes of these practices to date. The study to this point had thus provided information upon which the limitations and strengths of learner participation practices could be assessed. At this point, a summary was developed of the actual limitations and strengths as identified by the sources cited in Step 2. These limitations and strengths were examined as they relate to various categories of affected parties: "learners," "staff," and "others."

Key issues to be considered

Recommendations (based on the above data and analyses) were prepared for consideration by practitioners, learners, support organizations, researchers, and other interested parties. These recommendations were a synthesis of recommendations provided by more than seventy informants, as filtered through the researcher's own perspective on what needs to be done. The recommendations identified steps which might be taken to strengthen and expand the kinds of learner participation practices developed to date.

Conclusion

Because learner participation practices put learners in active roles not normally expected of adult non-readers, the practices are a challenge to many of the common assumptions about this disenfranchised segment of the American people. These activities hold a great deal of promise for learners, but for the practices to be successful, much more than rhetoric is needed. Clear, concrete guidelines and ongoing critical analysis are needed vis-a-vis participatory alternatives. This study attempts to put flesh on the bones of the undernourished practitioners and learners who have been struggling to make participatory adult literacy education work.

ENDNOTES

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3. David Harman, *Turning Illiteracy Around: An Agenda for National Action*, Working Paper Number 2 (New York: Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1985), p. 22.

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12. Jonathan Kozol, *Where Stands the Republic? Illiteracy: A Warning and A Challenge to the Nation's Press* (Atlanta: Cox Newspapers, 1986), p. 21.

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14. John P. Comings, "The Participatory Development of Media and Materials for Nonformal Education (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, September 1979), p. 13.

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19. Cohen and Uphoff, ibid.

20. Ross Kidd and Krishna Kumar, "Co-opting Freire: A Critical Analysis of Pseudo-Freirean Adult Education," Political and Economic Weekly XVI (3 and 10 January 1981): 27-36.

21. Lyra Srinivasan, Perspectives on Nonformal Learning (New York: World Education, 1977).

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23. Arlene Fingeret, Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions (Columbus, Ohio: ERIC CLearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1984).

24. Paul Ilsley, Adult Literacy Volunteers: Issues and Ideas (Columbus, Ohio: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1985).

25. Harman and Hunter, ibid., pp. 7-8.

26. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 916.

27. See Appendix A for more details on how these sources were identified and selected.

28. See Appendix B.

29. Ibid.

30. See Appendix D.

31. See Appendix C.

32. See Appendices D and E.

33. See Appendices E and F.

34. See Appendix G.

35. See Appendix H.

CHAPTER II

THREE PURPOSES FOR LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

This chapter begins with brief introductions to what the term "participation" means in the context of educational and other social development efforts, and to the "three purposes" which serve as a framework for the subsequent review of literature. It then moves on to a more-detailed review of writers who advocate active learner participation in literacy programs, first in reference to instructional activities and then in regard to management activities.

"Participation" Defined

Clients of social and economic development efforts are seen by development theorists as being potential participants in the initiation, planning, implementation, benefits, and evaluation of development efforts.[1] This study will look at participation as a process which has many potential outcomes for the individual. The individual can be merely "manipulated" or provided with "therapy"; or the individual can be merely consulted for token input into the process; or the individual can have a deeper form of participation in which he or she has varying degrees of actual control over the process.[2]

This chapter describes a wide range of sources who argue for active client participation. While the overall focus of this study is on participatory practices within the U.S. adult literacy field, the sources cited here come from both the field of education and from other social service and management realms. This breadth of sources was chosen in part to illustrate the significant amount and variation of thought on the topic of client participation. In part, however, it was necessary to go outside the adult literacy field because of the limited amount of research on the issue of participation which has been developed in that field to date.[3]

Three Purposes for Learner Participation

The following literature review was begun with the assumption that thinking on the uses of learner participation practices could be divided according to the categories of educational reform efforts identified by Paulston.[4] That is, it was initially assumed that proponents of participatory practices would have either a "liberal" (individually-oriented, gradual-change) orientation or a "critical" (social-structure-oriented, politicized, confrontational) perspective on the use of these innovative practices.

However, as the literature review proceeded, it became clear that at least one more major rationale for learner participation was "out there." This view is characterized by an intentional or unconscious avoidance of the larger personal, social, and political implications of learner participation. Instead, this third perspective focuses on the more immediate, practical implications which enhanced learner participation have on program efficiency. This third perspective was termed the "efficiency" view, and it shares many of the characteristics of the "technicist" approach to literacy instruction described by Ilsley.[5] Other useful and similar categorizations of perspectives on literacy instruction and nonformal education are those of Fingeret,[6] Kidd and Kumar,[7] and Srinivasan.[8]

As the literature review progressed, it also became clear that the theorists and practitioners identified tended to shift back and forth from one argument to another or to combine two or more perspectives in their thinking. With this realization, it was felt that rather than trying to create formalized -- and artificial -- "perspectives" or "schools" vis-a-vis the learner participation concept, it would be better for the literature review to focus on the "purposes" which sources have identified for learner participation practices. Thus, the following literature review is organized according to the three major purposes of "efficiency," "personal development," and "social change."

Learner Participation in Instruction

In Learning to Read: The Great Debate, Jeanne Chall breaks available theories on how people learn to read into two classifications: "code-emphasis" theories and "meaning-emphasis" theories. Proponents of the former tend to "view the reading process as developing from perception of letters, spelling patterns, and words, to sentences and paragraph meaning." Supporters of the latter "meaning-emphasis" view, on the other hand, "stress the first importance of language and higher cognitive skills . . . for reading comprehension and also for word recognition."[9] It is within the "meaning-emphasis" classification that the following three sets of arguments for learner-participation in the instructional process most comfortably fit. This is because, taken collectively, the three arguments stress that learners must find the reading and writing process to be relevant to their personal experience if they are to be efficient users of the written language and use the educational process to enhance their personal development and improve the world around them.

Purpose #1: "Efficiency"

A number of writers argue that learner participation practices are to be encouraged primarily for the purpose of greater technical efficiency of the program. According to this view, learners engaged in special participatory activities will be more likely to be enthusiastic, interested, and efficient in what they are doing in the program. Acquisition of reading skills, reduction in drop-out rates, and commitment to smooth operation of the program are seen as likely outcomes. Proponents of this view place relatively little or no emphasis on using learner participation practices to achieve affective change in the learner for its own sake. Where affective changes are the aim, those changes are undertaken more to facilitate technical program goals than for the effect that those changes might have on the learner.

These arguments are based on the assumption that reading is a process of relating visual information (the printed message) to nonvisual information (the reader's existing knowledge), to transform the visual information into information which is of personal meaning to the reader. This process is that much more efficient when the subject matter is related to themes of interest to the reader, as the reader is that much more motivated to transform the given information in a personally-fulfilling way.

Following from this reasoning, Frank Smith argues in Understanding Reading that the reading-instruction process should be organized in such a way as to maximize the brain's strong point, which he terms "utilization of what it knows already." This should be done while minimizing the brain's weakest area, which Smith identifies as "processing of a lot of new information, especially when that new information makes little sense."[10]

He goes on to say that the process of learning to read is one in which the reader gradually makes "sense of more and more kinds of language in more and more contexts." This process, he says, is "fundamentally a matter of experience."[11] To facilitate this process, the teacher need not rely on one universally-applicable instructional "method," but should rather set up a learning environment which encourages the learner to explore among a variety of materials to find ones which are particularly meaningful. The reader should be allowed to make mistakes and learn which materials are not important. The reader should be allowed to correct him or herself and not have to depend on others to make the corrections. The reader shouldn't be expected to learn symbols outside of a meaningful context. Unfortunately, most instructional systems are not based on such principles, and teachers often have little time or resources to provide a more ideal learning environment. Teachers and others believing in these principles should nonetheless at the minimum reduce conditions which reduce efficient learning.

In "Behind the Eye: What Happens in Reading," Kenneth Goodman similarly claims that meaningfulness is necessary to provide incentive for readers to learn to read. He says that instructional materials "at all stages must necessarily be meaningful." "Common discussive language" is a logical starting point for reading activities, examples of which include "experience stories, directions, labels, (and) signs."[12]

Goodman's model of reading includes skills of selecting, predicting, searching, tentative choosing, and others, all of which require the reader to take an energetic, active role as a seeker of meaning in print. An effective reading-instruction program would be structured to provide the learner with regular opportunities to develop those active skills.

Donald Graves[13] applies similar principles to the writing process, claiming that writing is "an organic process" which should not be fragmented by instructional activities which remove writing from natural contexts and thereby make it a ritual devoid of meaning for the learner.

Dorothy Watson[14] likewise distinguishes between learning the form of written language and learning its true function, which she sees as reading for meaning. In a good reading-instruction program, the reader actively selects reading materials according to his or her own interests. The learner is then allowed to practice, make mistakes, and discuss the readings.

Jerome Harste, Virginia Woodward, and Carolyn Burke, from their studies of how children use written language, have concluded that reading and writing are "tools which language users use in the process of getting things done." People learn to use written language "through meaningful encounters with print." To enable new readers to have such meaningful print-related experiences, reading instructors should provide them with "multiple opportunities to test their written language hypotheses in a low-risk environment." Materials to be used in such a program might include "daily journals, newspapers, message boards, letters to pen pals, recipes, menus, reading environmental print, and other functional uses of written language." The learner should have a right to choose what is meaningful from such a variety of available materials, as this is in fact the context in which reading occurs in this society. When learners choose reading experiences freely, they are likely to develop a greater sense of ownership of the reading process.[15]

These and other writers[16] argue that the reading instruction process must respect the previous experience and personal interests and capacities of the learner. Instructional activities must therefore involve learners in continually identifying those interests and in actively seeking tc make the printed word personally meaningful to themselves.

Purpose #2: "Personal Development"

Other sources would generally support the above claims for the "technical" usefulness of learner participation. However, these thinkers would argue that program efficiency is not an adequate end in itself and that learner participation should also be aimed at the achievement of various other objectives for the individual learner. Such goals could include an increased ability to conceptualize and solve problems, improvements in self-image and self-confidence, an improved ability to work with others, or enhancement of other personal qualities and technical skills.

According to this view, education should help individual learners to "cope" with the world around them. Education should provide knowledge, positive attitudes, and a problem-solving perspective which would enable individuals to solve problems that they meet in everyday life. Supporters of this perspective on the need for active learner participation in instruction in turn fall roughly into the "human potential" and "competency-based" camps.

The human potential outlook on adult education is presented by Malcolm Knowles in Self-Directed Learning. He claims that education should aim at helping the learner to develop "skills of inquiry," whereby the individual is able (with or without others' help) to "take the initiative" in a "self-directed learning" process. Learners should be able to assess their own learning needs and objectives, identify human and material resources, and develop, implement, and evaluate appropriate learning strategies.[17]

Knowles points to other humanists as supporters of this kind of self-directed adult learning. He quotes Unesco's Learning to Be as saying that no longer should the learner be seen as the "object" to be shaped by the educational process. Rather, the learner must become "the subject of his own education," no longer "submitting to education" but instead "educating himself." The Unesco document sees this basic change in the relationship of the individual to himself as "the most difficult problem facing education for the future decades."[18] Unesco suggests that educators should help each individual to fulfill his or her "aspirations to self-learning" by providing multiple educational opportunities and incentives, both within and outside formal educational institutions.[19]

Another source quoted by Knowles in support of a self-directed approach to education is humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. According to Rogers, a "theoretically optimal experience of personal growth," whether in the form of "client-centered therapy or some other experience of learning," would enable an individual to "function in all (his or her) complexity" to actively chart the course of his or her life.[20]

Borrowing ideas from Rogers and similar theorists, Charles Curran developed a "counseling-learning" approach to second language and other learning situations. This approach "aims at adapting basic subtleties and awareness from the field of counseling and psychotherapy, and integrating them into learning." Through this group learning approach,

> a very special kind of community-involvement results. An intense atmosphere of warmth and belonging is produced which deeply relates each person not only to the teacher-knower but to everyone in the learning group. This kind of security and support from one another, and the expert, is almost the exact opposite of the atmosphere created by competitive, "laissez-faire" classroom individualism. The student never feels isolated and alone but rather always senses the strong reassurance, help and positive regard of everyone else. In an almost literal sense, he or she feels everyone is "pulling" for them and so is delighted by their even minimal success."[21]

In this process, learners proceed through an initial stage of dependence on the teacher, which can be coupled with hesitation about whether to enter the process at all. They then proceed to increased self-confidence as active, independent developers of new knowledge. Learners also in turn become able to help fellow group members to proceed in these ways. The learner thereby develops not only new knowledge -- in this case, language skills -- but self-directed learning and "helping" skills, as well.

Various reading-instruction specialists working with children and adolescents have incorporated similar "personal development" principles into their views on how reading and writing should be taught. Largely because of the relative lack of documentation of adult literacy instructional practices which might serve as basic references for those wishing to implement participatory practices with adults, the work of these practitioners has been widely adapted by the adult literacy field. In her widely-read Teacher, for example, Sylvia Ashton-Warner argues that basic reading and writing activities should be based on a "key vocabulary" of words which have special, intensive meaning to the learner. Such a reading vocabulary "is the key that unlocks the mind and releases the tongue." When early reading activities are based on such personally-important concepts, "a love of reading . . . (and) a lifetime of books" are the likely result. "It is the key whose turning preserves intact for a little longer the true personality (of the learner)."[22]

Ashton-Warner says that such validating of one's own inner thoughts and feelings through writing and reading about them was particularly important for the Maori children with whom she worked in New Zealand. These children, she felt, were in danger of losing their own culture and becoming dominated by middle-class European standards[23] imposed through the mass media.[24] They also were in danger of being forced to see reading and writing as a ritual in which "appearance" is overemphasized and "meaning is atrophied."[25]

To get at that hidden and powerful key vocabulary, learners are encouraged to volunteer their own thoughts and feelings. Fear and sex tended to be the most common themes which emerged for the typical Maori student with whom Ashton-Warner worked, and "the more it means to him the more value it is to him."[26] Learners produce their own written stories based on this vocabulary, read them aloud to each other, read each others' works, and then discuss what has been read.[27]

Ashton-Warner sees such education as an antidote to "the unlived life" increasingly dominant in modern society.[28] When the creative powers of the learner are fostered, the learner will be better able to satisfy the full range of his or her needs in a creative way. She quotes Erich Fromm as saying that by curtailing expansiveness in children, we increase the likelihood of their being destructive individuals. "Destructiveness is the outcome of the unlived life."[29] Thus, for Ashton-Warner, her "organic" approach to education develops the creativity vital to not only the individual but to the society as well.

In The New Hooked on Books, Daniel Fader applies a similar perspective on reading instruction to his work with a different sort of "minority" group -- in this case, adolescent "trouble-makers" in a Michigan reform school. He argues that overdependence within families on television-watching, increase in class sizes, and poor teaching methods and materials have combined to produce children not interested in reading. "The chief problem in teaching reading is not intellect but motivation."[30] He feels that student-produced materials (such as school newspapers and journal-writing),[31] healthy peer pressure and support,[32] and activities (like "booktalk") and materials such as popular paperbacks, magazines, and newspapers[33] which focus on reading for meaning are key ways of encouraging learner interest. Such meaning-oriented activities encourage learners to see literacy as a means to understanding their own world in their own terms, not according to the terms of the dominant culture.

Fader cites evidence[34] indicating that the self-image and anxiety levels of learners participating in these activities improved significantly. The key to the success of such activities, Fader feels, is that they "return teaching to where kids are and removes it from the esoteric realm of where they ought to be".[35] In contrast, poor readers are "taught the elements -- the pieces -- of reading" rather than the "why" of reading.[36]

In a reading instruction approach developed more directly for adults, Donald Mocker calls for a "cooperative learning process" through which students initially select problems which are of concern to them. The learners then define for themselves why this material is important to them. The teacher at this point challenges students with questions which encourage them to articulate alternative explanations and outcomes of events described in the reading passages. This articulation can take the form of verbal accounts, written presentations, or role plays. In this process, language skills are taught within "the context of a problem which has been identified by the adult student. . . . Again, the notion of the learner's responsibility is reinforced."[37]

While the above writers focus in particular on improving the self-image and self-directedness of the learner, the advocates of "competency-based" and "functional" approaches to literacy instruction see the personal development functions of literacy education in more concrete terms. Through improved literacy skills, learners should be able to improve their life situations by more efficiently handling job-related and other common life tasks. In the United States, the Adult Performance Level (APL) study[38] assumed that, to be functionally competent in modern American society, an individual requires the ability to apply the 3Rs and problem-solving skills to tasks typically encountered in roles as workers, heads of households, consumers, and citizens.

Internationally, Phillip Coombs and his colleagues Roy Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed[39] identified a set of "minimum essential learning needs" as the basis for preparing solid citizens in any society. These needs included positive attitudes, functional literacy and numeracy, a scientific outlook, family life knowledge and skills, vocational knowledge and skills, and knowledge and skills for civic participation. As defined in Unesco's Practical Guide to Functional Literacy, advocates of the functional literacy concept similarly saw "functional literacy training (as) an activity aimed at the intellectual and civic training of the worker and his adaptation to the industrial environment and its technical demands."[40]

A field of "competency-based" and "functional" literacy instruction has emerged based on such assumptions. In many of these programs, the learner is expected to identify the competency areas which are to be the focus of the applied-literacy training. Program staff then implement instructional activities designed to develop the corresponding skills, knowledge, and attitudes required by those competencies. In some of these "functional" programs, however, learners are given little opportunity to even identify what competencies they need. Instead, program administrators in effect hand the learners a set of pre-determined objectives. The learner in turn is expected to "learn" the skills associated with those objectives.

Critics[41] of these latter "pre-determined" competency-based and functional literacy approaches argue that the learner's role in resulting programs tends to be overly passive. That is, the learner functions as a recipient of technical and literacy skills transmitted from others around themes and tasks largely identified by others. Some practitioners have tried to combine the best aspects of competency-based programs -- such as when the learner gains useful practical skills which can contribute to the learner's overall personal development -- with the kinds of self-directed learning described above. Leni Greenfield and Flynn Nogueira, for example, recommend a combination of a functional literacy approach and a language experience approach. In such a program, the "teacher would find out what interests and/or needs the adults have. Then, using that information, the teacher could begin a word list" around which reading, writing, and problem-solving activities could be built. "Hypothetical situations, based on real-life experiences which develop reading and problem solving skills, give the adult more meaningful learning experiences and a more positive attitude toward skills development."[42]

In his work in U.S. military programs, Thomas Sticht has combine a prescribed set of learning objectives with instructional activities which demand active analysis and expression on the part of the learner. In one case,[43] learners were to read information on a particular technical procedure and then draw pictures or prepare flowcharts, matrices, or tables which re-presented the information in the learners' own "words." Such activities were intended as a means of giving personnel practice in using technical language and thinking in the ways that they would have to use them on the job.

In summary, a number of theorists and practitioners see learner participation in literacy training as a means to more than mere improved reading and writing skills for the learner. According to this view, literacy instruction should also improve the learner's attitudes toward self and society, and provide social and technical skills needed to enable him or her to successfully solve technical problems encountered in daily life.

Purpose #3: "Social Change"

Another view holds that both the efficiency and personal development arguments make valuable contributions -- as far as they go. However, those arguments do not go far enough in getting at the fundamental root causes of the problems being faced by many adult learners. Social change advocates[44] claim that to understand those problems, one must carefully study the historical conditions which shape the illiterate's life. In the case of a large segment of the adult non-readers in the United States, that life has been characterized by poor physical conditions, poor quality education, an inferior social status, and a lack of economic and political power. It is these oppressive conditions which shape the lives of many adult non-readers and lead, in particular, to the high incidence of functional illiteracy among low-income populations. And it is, in turn, adult education's role to develop the learner's abilities to actively analyze and shape those conditions rather than to be passively shaped by them.

For an educational program to accomplish this goal of social change, active participation by the learner in the educational process is required. The learner will thereby "learn by doing," learning to become an active transformer of the world outside by developing those transforming abilities within the educational program setting. Active learner participation in shaping conditions is not merely a tool to achieve educational objectives. Rather, it is a way of life. Because this approach requires a collective effort of learners and educators working in dialogue to analyze and change the status quo, it is inherently political and a step beyond the more individually-oriented personal development approach.

The source of this perspective has, to a large degree, been adult literacy efforts in the Third World. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has since the late 1960s become the central figure in this school, and literacy efforts worldwide are being built on ideas borrowed from Freire's work. For Freire, illiteracy isn't a disease to be "cured" or a poison herb to be "eradicated." As he states in The Politics of Education, it is rather

> . . . one of the concrete expressions of an unjust social reality. . . . (It is) not a strictly

> linguistic or exclusively pedagogical or methodological problem. It is political . . . a process of search and creation . . . to perceive the deeper meaning of language and the word, the word, in essence, they are being denied.[45]

The role of learners in such education is to identify themes of personal importance to themselves, to develop their own texts based on those themes, and to critically analyze texts produced by others. Through this process of dialogue among learners and educational facilitators, the learners and staff become creative subjects, able to "problematize" their situations and identify solutions to those problems. This process is to form the basis for individual or collective action needed to positively change the situations in which the learners live.

Freire would likely see those focusing on "personal development" as the goal of literacy education as being limited by their unwillingness or inability to go beyond individualized -- and hence incremental, at best -- change:

> Even though they speak of liberating education, they are conditioned by their vision of liberation as an individual activity that should take place through a change of consciousness and not through the social and historical praxis of human beings.[46]

Education is thus to be seen as part of a larger process of change, and not as a mere fine-tuning of the individual's outlook and technical skills.

Julius Nyerere shares this view of the link between adult education and social change. For post-colonial Tanzania, a new form of education was needed to develop attitudes and skills needed by Tanzanians for the creation of a new "African socialism," a blending of the best of African tradition and modern ways. For Nyerere, adult education is a process of helping the adults to expand their understanding of the world, a process which "activates them, helps them to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions themselves."[47]

In the United States, Carman St. John Hunter is one of the most visible of the proponents of a social change perspective on adult literacy education. She articulates a social change perspective on the causes of the literacy problem and what must be done to solve it:

> Illiteracy is not an isolated phenomenon. It can neither be understood nor responded to apart from the complex set of social, political, and economic issues of which it is but one indicator. . . . Poverty is the underlying cause of illiteracy. Without any proven will or ability to break the chains of poverty, no government has been able to make significant progress toward universal literacy. . . . Literacy cannot be understood as a remedial program, designed and delivered by zealous missionaries to those "in need." Rather, literacy levels will increase where there is serious commitment to goals of equity and justice and where the educationally disadvantaged are able to be involved in shaping their own learning within the context of reshaping the social, political, economic, and cultural environment within which they live. If we are to begin with programs that promote participation and direction by learners, that degree of openness can become a first step toward the larger, more socially and economically inclusive change that will provide the basis on which universal literacy can be realized.[48]

As described by Fernando Cardenal and Valerie Miller,[49] the Nicaraguan literacy campaign grew out of a struggle for this kind of radical change. The designers of the campaign saw literacy as a means of raising the society's consciousness about the value of the individual "as a maker of history, an actor of an important social role . . . with rights and responsibilities." With such a philosophical base, the campaign developed instructional techniques which required active learner participation in discussions and reading and writing activities around themes related to national development. In this process, learners were to be engaged in transforming reality, committing themselves, and participating in national efforts for social change. Some graduates of the campaign were trained as facilitators of community learning groups. These groups in turn were integrated into a larger network of labor and other organizations which were trying to build a new society. In these efforts, "success came from a commitment of the spirit" of all involved, as learners and teachers worked as partners, with the teacher learning to "read from the book" of the peasant.

In Deschooling Society, Ivan Illich[50] argues that schools and other major modern social institutions rob the average individual of the self-concept and skills needed to be creative and self-reliant. The resulting dependency of individuals on central institutions is producing a bureaucratic, demoralized society. An educational alternative should be developed in which learners are encouraged to define and seek out information and guidance in the surrounding community. Such a re-orientation of citizens vis-a-vis traditional centralized sources of authority would produce a new, more democratic (self-ruling) society.

In Illiterate America Jonathan Kozol[51] calls for a national adult literacy movement in the United States in which learners and activists build learning activities around learner-identified, personally-compelling interests which are represented in instructional activities in the form of "dangerous words." Such a learner-centered, decentralized movement would be housed in non-traditional neighborhood learning sites easily accessible to -- and controlled by -- learners. Learners and instructors would relate to each other more as partners in a larger struggle to change the learner's role in society than in the traditional top-down teacher-student relationship.

In A Look at Illiteracy in America Today -- The Problem, The Solutions, The Alternatives, Michael Fox likewise calls for a shift of the nation's literacy efforts toward a new "emphasis on learner-centered goals." In this approach, learners would decide program goals and strategies, and teach and otherwise help each other in various aspects of the program.[52] For Fox, such learner-centered efforts can enable learners to tackle the various forms of discrimination, welfare dependency, unemployment, poor housing, and general sense of powerlessness with which many of them live.

In Critical Teaching and Everyday Life, Ira Shor describes a similar effort to use remedial literacy education to promote a critical, creative perspective among learners. In his experience as a remedial English teacher of working-class community college students in New York City, Shor built curricula around learner-identified themes of marriage and child-rearing, sexuality, self-government, utopia, school experiences, clothing styles, and even "the hamburger," a code word for nutrition and the fast-food industry. Participatory learning activities were developed on such themes to counter the negative effects of education and mass media on the learners' self-image and world outlook. Shor says:

> A pedagogy which empowers students to intervene in the making of history is more than a literacy campaign. Critical education prepares students to be their own agents for social change, their own creators of democratic culture. They gain skills of philosophical abstraction which enable them to separate themselves from manipulation and from the routine flow of time. Consequently their literacy is a challenge to their control by corporate culture.[53]

In actual practice, the Citizenship Schools operated during the civil rights era by the Highlander Folk School are a particularly clear example of a social change approach to literacy education. These schools were begun by black residents of Johns Island, South Carolina, in collaboration with Tennessee-based Highlander. Highlander had begun in the 1930s as a training center for labor organizers in the South. By the 1950s, the center was increasingly involved in training of organizers in the growing civil rights movement.[54]

The Citizenship Schools were begun on Johns Island to enable local illiterate black residents to read the state consitution, a requirement for anyone wanting to register to vote. The program organizers hoped that, along with those specific literacy skills, more general skills of cooperative problem-solving could be learned, as well. The classes were run by local black residents, using meaningful vocabulary and reading and writing activities taken from the learners' own lives and interests. "Big ideas" were studied in the words of familiar songs, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the South Carolina Constitution,[55] letters to family members in the military, money orders, newspapers, and shopping lists. Learners were challenged to go out and learn about how their communities worked by, for example, visiting the employment office to get the name of the supervisor, the hours the office was open, and information about how they could apply for work. An organizer recounts:

> When they came back the next night, they'd bring us this information. Then we had dry cleaners' bags. We wrote the information on dry cleaners' bags and hung it on a broomstick. They learned to read those things that were said to them. That's one way of teaching the reading.[56]

The "final exam" consisted of a trip to City Hall, where students attempted to register to vote after three months of preparation.

This program was eventually taken over by Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and spread all over the South. SCLC saw it as a means of entering into the community for the purpose of developing civil rights activities without unnecessarily attracting the wrath of an unsupportive power structure.[57]

Learner Participation in Management

Purposes #1 and 2: "efficiency" and "personal development"

Three recent reports on "effective" literacy-program practices describe examples of learner participation in the not-strictly-instructional "management" component of program activities. In all three cases, the arguments provided for learner participation are presented on grounds of either "efficiency" or "personal development."

In the first such report, Essential Characteristics of Effective Adult Literacy Programs: A Review and Analysis of the Research, Miriam Balmuth[58] describes examples of learners taking active roles in non-instructional aspects of their programs. These examples tend to stress the positive impact of learner participation on the efficiency of the various program operations described. Some of the learner participation practices described also are seen as having positive impact on the learner's self-image, social skills, and other areas held important by advocates of the personal-development perspective.

To support the view that learners have a useful role to play in the recruitment of other learners, Balmuth quotes from Mulvey's *Recruitment in Adult Basic Education, Handbook*[59] which claims that successful recruitment of adult basic skills students in the United States has "relied primarily upon personal invitation . . . from a member of the student's own peer group."

Balmuth likewise draws on the experience of the nationally-acclaimed Jefferson County (Kentucky) Adult Reading Project which found that successful students are, in some cases, some of the most effective recruiters. "Students who have successfully completed the program should be used in recruitment teams to go to areas of need for presentations concerning their own personal success stories."[60]

Balmuth summarizes similar examples from Gladys Irish's 1980 report, "Reaching the Least Educated Adult":[61] "The combination of door-to-door canvassing and personalized TV spots involving program participants accounted for the great majority of enrollees in the program."

Balmuth provides one more example of learner participation in recruitment in her quotation from

Greenleigh Associates' 1969 study of thirteen adult basic education programs in New Jersey. Current program participants "were the best recruiters and . . . word of mouth was the best recruitment technique."[62]

Balmuth argues that a key advantage of having learners participate in the recruitment of new program participants is that it provides potential participants with successful role models and a new hope for what a renewed effort at education might provide. She quotes from Patricia Cross' The Missing Link: Connecting Adult Learners to Learning Resources:

> Those with low educational attainment have probably had many bleak experiences with education. If they learned one thing in school it may have been that they were not good at learning . . . and that their feelings of self-worth will not be enhanced by exposing themselves to further failure. . . . It is not simply a matter of making information about educational opportunity available to undereducated Americans, it is a matter of changing the image of education and learning -- for individuals and for whole groups.[63]

In Lauren Resnick's and Betty Robinson's "Motivational Aspects of the Literacy Problem," Balmuth finds similar arguments for the importance for prospective students to have clear role models in the form of successful students.[64]

Balmuth sees intake procedures -- which include initial interviews, scheduling, and needs assessments -- as another area in which learners should be encouraged to be as open and assertive as possible.[65] In this case, initial communications between learners and staff are set up to allow new recruits to freely express their concerns and expectations vis-a-vis joining the program. Through open communications, learners not only are to feel more relaxed in the program setting, but are to be clear about what they will -- and will not -- be able to accomplish in the program.

Experienced learners can be of great help to newcomers during critical initial instructional sessions. These early experiences in a program can make or break a newcomer's self-confidence and interest vis-a-vis the program. Thus all concerned with the program need to approach the recruitment, intake, and initial instructions as if it were "a journey on eggshells."[66]

As an example of how learners can help during this delicate phase, Balmuth takes another lesson from the Jefferson County program, which, "in recognition of the importance of the first session . . . arranged for former students to be on hand to greet new students and remain to serve as tutors."[67]

As a way of reducing dropout rates and absenteeism and of generally maintaining learner morale and interest in the program, Balmuth cites two examples. In the first, taken from the Jefferson County program,[68] a "buddy system" was developed through which a "buddy" would report to the group any time his or her partner was absent. In the second example,[69] evidence indicated that "participation in (program) planning by community members tends to result in significantly higher attendance. . . . The sense of ownership that such participation implies may go a long way toward binding the students to the program."

Other means identified by Balmuth of assuring regular attendance include self-help support groups and socializing activities. She cites evidence from Patricia Cohen Gold's Literacy Training in Penal Institutions[70] which identifies "plateaus of progress" at which "illiterates are at high risk for dropping out of the literacy program." Gold recommends "self-help support groups of ABE students to help deal with the frustration at such times and perhaps prevent the student from withdrawing."

Regarding the value of providing structures in which learners can socialize with other program participants, Balmuth cites evidence from Greenleigh Associates,[71] and Jones and Petry.[72] Anabel Newman[73] is also quoted as saying that literacy students "often find much enjoyment in the social times made available before, during, or after class time." Sharon Darling[74] is likewise quoted by Balmuth as recommending that reading class should be a "pleasant social experience" and that the "dynamics of the group be structured to encourage each student to motivate others to attend regularly."

Renee Lerche's Effective Adult Literacy Programs similarly sees value in involving learners in "support" activities, particularly for the benefit of newcomers to a program. Lerche cites programs which involve current students "as part of large-group presentations or as part of small-group 'rap sessions'." Such uses of current or former students are seen as effective because they have many of the same problems as new students and "can explain how they deal with the problems and successfully completed the program." These personal stories by students "are real and believable and give new students confidence in the claims of program staff." By selecting a cross-section of students to make presentations, the planner of an orientation activity can "address the variety of viewpoints, concerns, anxieties, and goals that may exist in the audience of new students."[75]

Lerche also describes the potential of learner participation in a program's efforts to develop and maintain good relations with the community in which it operates:

> What happens within the program's walls also gets talked about. Rumors about consistent poor performance by tutors or teachers escape easily into the community grapevine. But word of mouth is at its best when the words are from a "satisfied customer." When this customer is a friend, relative, or community resident respected by a potential student, recruitment becomes a self-generating process.[76]

A third major report on effective program practices, Guidelines for Effective Adult Literacy Programs, describes additional ways in which learners can actively participate in program governance and other management activities. These include serving on the program board or advisory committee, as well as recruiting other learners, evaluating instructional activities, participating in staff orientation and training, developing program goals, and other activities.[77]

David Kinsey cites both "efficiency" and "personal development" arguments in his call for greater learner participation in the evaluation and planning of adult nonformal education programs:

> Program clientele . . . may be mechanistic or narrowly pragmatic in their use of the program without reflecting on their experience, making use of its learning potential, or "owning" the process. Practitioners' expectations and assumptions may differ from those of their colleagues and clientele, and there may be serious discrepancies in communication. Or again, discouragement and failures may result in reduced involvement and energy, a loss of momentum or even dropouts among practitioners and clientele. . . . Experience has shown that a participatory evaluation process can serve to remedy such problems . . . and there are numerous models (of planning and evaluation procedures) in the pedagogical and group dynamics literature that could be made operational for nonformal education programs.[78]

Jon Deveaux[79] summarizes the above forms of and arguments for learner participation, particularly in group formats which "build on the fact that adults have already engaged the world, learned a considerable amount, and probably taught someone something." Peer instruction "minimizes teacher dependency" and maximizes group problem solving and "group energy and commitment. . . . People who teach others develop confidence, self-reliance, learn to do homework, and come to school regularly." Learner participation can have therapeutic value, as in the case of students who counsel one another, "for who better than they know" about the problems which their fellow learners face. Learner participation also

> means having students elect representatives to the program's Board of Directors, helping students develop committees to help with building maintenance, fundraising, curriculum development and whatever is appropriate for a program. . . . Such activities as bus trips or theater parties are among the few social events in which adults who cannot read can participate and not have to worry about being exposed as an illiterate because their companions on these outings will be fellow students and staff and all can help one another.

Purpose #3: "Social Change"

A wide range of theorists and practitioners from the fields of adult literacy, adult education, community development, and workplace management have developed theoretical bases for a "social change" perspective on learner participation in program management. In *Nonformal Education as an Empowering Process*, a survey of efforts to promote socio-political "empowerment" of historically powerless groups, Suzanne Kindervatter[80] describes a range of "empowering processes" which support an alternative vision of socio-economic development. In that alternative approach to development, popular democratic decision-making is a key feature.

To define that alternative view of the way that contemporary societies should be developing, Kindervatter quotes Robert Owens and Edgar Shaw[81] as saying that the key to the modernization of society is a restructuring of the relationship between government and people. In that new order, the people would have a say in policies which affect their lives. To implement such an order would require organizing "the mass of people in relatively autonomous local institutions," which in turn would be linked "with higher levels of the economy and society." On the political implications of popular participation, Owens and Shaw state that

> People can be expected to invest in a modern economy only when they believe they are part of it and can benefit from it.[82]

Kindervatter likewise says that, as emphasized by Denis Goulet and Michael Hudson, the amount of control people have in directing their own society's development is a critical development issue. That is, this factor of popular control is "the difference between being the agent of one's own development as defined in one's own terms and being a mere beneficiary of development as defined by someone else."[83]

Kindervatter provides examples of various types of "empowering processes" which support this alternative perspective on changing society. The community organizing approaches which she cites vary in the amount of direct confrontation which they undertake with the power structure. All of the approaches to community organizing, however,

> . . .begin with the people's interests . . . move at the community's pace . . .develop "native"

> leaders . . . promote peer support and mutual help . . . involve cooperative community problem-solving . . .emphasize discussion methods, democratic procedures, and action-taking . . . include an organizer who (facilitates rather than dominates the process) . . . and (gradually) transfers initiative and responsibility from the organizer to the people . . ."[84]

Kindervatter likewise describes workplace democratization efforts in which workers take varying degrees of control of their work situations. These attempts at workplace democratization have produced material and emotional benefits for the employees involved. Such material benefits have included increased productivity at the worksite, and emotional rewards have included an increased sense of ownership and solidarity among workers. She quotes Daniel Zwerdling as saying that a common outcome of many such efforts to involve workers in greater control of their work situations is that employees have learned how to critically analyze their situations and to develop suitable corrective strategies. This they have done on their own initiative, in groups which have in the process learned that "changes are possible. These skills more than any single change are perhaps the main accomplishment."[85]

Not only can efforts at democratizing the workplace lead to personal changes in the individual workers involved and to improvements in productivity and other conditions in the worksite; in some cases, efforts at workplace democratization are aimed at affecting larger social conditions outside the immediate workplace and individuals involved. Kindervatter again quotes Zwerdling:

> . . . collectives do not exist primarily to sell their specific products, or even primarily to provide its (sic) members with a livelihood. They exist to promote and serve as a model for radical social and political change."[6]

Kindervatter then turns to various "participatory approaches" to adult education, social-science research, and community development. In these approaches, participants are encouraged to work collectively to analyze their social situations, identify solutions to key problems, and take corrective action where appropriate. These approaches

> . . . give people power as decision-makers, not just "advisors," on all aspects of planning, from design to implementation to evaluation . . . base "content" on people's immediate interests . . . pose problems which participants themselves solve through discussion and action-taking . . . utilize methods which promote self-expression and dialogue . . . recognize the importance of training change agents according to the same participatory principles . . . may begin with an imposed structure but gradually enable people to define and control their own structure . . ."[7]

All of the above "social change" advocates support processes in which individuals -- usually in groups -- work to analyze and improve their situations. In these processes, participants to a greater or lesser degree consciously challenge the constraints imposed on them by the larger social context. The underlying principles of participatory decision-making and collective action support the notion that learners in adult literacy programs should likewise be encouraged to participate fully in the whole range of program activities.

Summary and Conclusion

From the work of a wide range of writers and practitioners, three major purposes can be identified for the use of participatory instructional and management practices in adult literacy education programs. Those arguing for active learner participation on grounds of program "efficiency" claim that learner participation is necessary for the efficient accomplishment of the program's reading and writing instructional objectives and management tasks. Those focusing on the second purpose, "human development," agree that efficient operations are worthy goals; they however believe that active learner participation can also help to develop self-confidence, an interest in learning, problem-solving abilities, social skills, and other assets vital to the overall personal growth of many learners. Those stressing the third, "social change," purpose argue that it is not enough for educational activities to be used to treat the technical and personal needs of the individual learner; rather, education should be a tool to enable individuals to work collectively to transform the fundamental problems imposed on them by the larger society. Examples of these various arguments are presented as they have appeared in the literature on participation, literacy education, community development, and management.

Within the field, those supporting the use of participatory practices will often cite more than one of the above purposes as goals of their work. At the same time, some learner participation advocates intentionally or unconsciously take a relatively more "purist" line in which they focus on only one of the purposes. Some participation advocates might, for example, avoid considering social change as a purpose because of the politically sensitive implications associated with arguments for social change. Others might reject "efficiency" arguments on the grounds that learners need much more in their lives than just being able to "read better." Given these difference within the range of supporters of learner participation practices, it can be said that there does exist a participatory approach to adult literacy education, but that those advocating this approach can vary considerably in the purposes which they see active learner participation serving for the learner.

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CHAPTER III

LEARNER PARTICIPATION: AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR IDEA IN THE U.S. LITERACY FIELD

The previous chapter establishes that there are at least three categories of reasons for wanting to put learners in active roles within literacy program contexts. This chapter looks at how these rationales are actually being put into practice within the various segements of the U.S. literacy field. To accomplish this, the chapter presents the findings from a national suggestive survey which identifies the forms, users, and extent of learner participation practices within the field.

This survey is significant in that there appears at present to be no equivalent survey information in the literature on learner participation. Due to its significance, the large amount of data generated by the survey is presented in a fair amount of detail, thus producing a lengthy chapter. For the sake of clarity, the chapter is divided into three sections.[1]

The first section defines who "the U.S. literacy field" is by describing the learners, practitioners, and support organizations who make up the field. The second section presents a detailed description of the practices which have actually been developed to date as means for fulfilling the learner participation purposes identified in Chapter II.

The final section provides an estimate of how commonly these various participatory practices are being used within the various segments of the field.

SECTION I:
THE MAKE-UP OF THE ADULT LITERACY FIELD IN THE UNITED STATES

The Learners

Estimates vary of the number of "adult illiterates" currently living in the United States.[2] When 1980 census data are applied to the most commonly-used measure, the Adult Performance Level study[3] estimates that 27 million adults[4] are functionally illiterate. That is, they are not able to apply basic reading, writing, and related thinking skills to tasks considered by the study to be commonly faced by adult Americans. That study also estimates that another 45 million American adults are only "marginally literate," in a grey area between functional illiteracy and an acceptable level of literacy. Every ethnic group and geographic area, and both genders, are represented in those figures. However, members of minority groups are disproportionately highly represented in the illiterate population. These same minority populations tend to also have high incidences of unemployment and other social problems, a fact which is seen as making attempts to deal with the illiteracy problem that much more difficult.[5]

Of that estimated number of U.S. adults with low levels of literacy skills, only 4 to 5 percent are currently enrolled in remedial education programs. Those that do enroll and succeed in improving their skills in some way tend to come from the "cream" of the pool of illiterates. Others, presumably, lack the motivation, self-confidence, life-supports, or program opportunities which they would need to enroll in and achieve something in a literacy program. Many of those who do enroll in programs drop out because the right combination of supporting factors is lacking. Many who do not enroll, as well as many who do join programs, get additional help with their literacy needs through informal, ad hoc help from relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and local institutions, although this informal tutoring tends to be sporadic and in response to specific literacy needs. As such, this informal help generally doesn't build the full range of literacy skills required for full literacy.[6]

The Literacy Providers

Apart from this informal help given to American "illiterates," there is a wide range of more-formalized programs which aim at helping that population to improve their literacy skills. These programs follow a variety of instructional approaches and formats, and they frequently are based in more than one institutional setting. For example, a program operating in a prison might be funded by a state Adult Basic Education office, use volunteers from a local church as tutors, and have special services for immigrant prisoners with limited proficiency in English. Such a program could therefore qualify as a "correctional" program, an "Adult Basic Education" project, a "volunteer" program, an effort of a "religious" group, or a "minority languages" program. With that as a qualification, the following section presents a brief overview of existing literacy programs, organized by major sponsoring institutions and/or target population.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs

Begun in 1965 by the U.S. Department of Education, this network of 14,000 local-level programs provides English-language basic skills instruction through the high-school equivalency level for about 2.6 million adults each year. The program is supported by a combination of federal funds and matching state and local monies.

At the state and local levels, ABE programs tend to be managed by either school systems or community colleges. The 41,000 paid ABE instructors frequently work on a part-time basis, and most have been trained primarily as elementary or secondary school teachers, with limited specialized training in adult education per se. Instructional activities are as a rule organized in a fairly traditional "class" format, often using commercially-prepared adult education texts. This relatively formalized curriculum is dictated in some cases by funding sources which require standardized testing of students as a requisite for additional funding.

The ABE student population is divided equally between native English speakers and an immigrant population which participates in English-as-a-second-language activities. Aprroximately 25% of ABE students are at an advanced level, preparing for the high-school equivalency examination; the remainder of students have lower-level skills.[7]

Volunteer programs

Recent national public awareness campaigns have been pushing the notion that, if you want to help solve the American illiteracy problem, "All you need is a degree of caring." That is, average citizens can help eradicate illiteracy by volunteering their time to serve as volunteer tutors.

In fact, large numbers of Americans have been volunteering their services for years, primarily under the direction of the two major volunteer organizations, Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Founded with the name National Affiliation for Literacy Advance in the late 1950s and as the domestic branch of Laubach Literacy International, LLA trains, certifies, and supervizes 50,000 tutors who work with 60,000 adult students. These tutorials are carried out in 500 local literacy councils in 21 states nationwide. Founded in 1967, LVA likewise prepares and supplies volunteer tutors in 267 local-level programs in 34 states, with 20,000 tutors working with 21,000 adult students. Both LLA and LVA have developed their own instructional materials. These materials have, to date, been designed primarily for use in one-to-one tutorial sessions, although both organizations are now developing the use of group-instruction formats as well.

While LLA and LVA represent the largest numbers of volunteer tutors, an additional unknown number of volunteers work with various types of literacy programs not directly affiliated with the two national organizations. The overall number of volunteer tutors has increased greatly in recent years, largely in response to public-awareness appeals which focus on recruiting of volunteers.*

Community based organizations

A third, often overlooked, segment of the literacy field is that of the community based organizations (CBOs). Just what is meant by this term varies according to who is using it. As used by some, CBOs in effect include any organization which operates from a facility located in a community.

Others, however, argue for a more precise definition. The Association for Community Based Education (ACBE) has defined the term as follows:

> . . . groups set up to serve a given geographical area and constituency -- usually urban or rural poverty communities, and the educationally, economically and socially disadvantaged. They are formed by their constituencies -- including . . . ethnic, racial and cultural minorities -- to meet specific needs that exist within the community. Their goals inevitably go beyond the mere provision of educational services to missions of individual and community empowerment. They often link education to community development activities. Their methodological approaches are non-traditional, to meet the needs of those whom traditional education has failed, and learner-centered, focused on helping people meet objectives they themselves set in response to their own needs.[9]

ACBE, which serves as the primary national voice for these programs, and others argue that such a definition is necessary to distinguish the special features of CBOs, and to in effect give credit where credit is due: to those organizations which have made the special efforts to integrate themselves into the needs and structure of the community.

If we accept ACBE's definition, it is difficult to determine with any precision the numbers of CBOs providing literacy services. This is due, in part, to the "alternative" nature of those organizations and their reluctance or lack of interest vis-a-vis being part of the normal networks of literacy providers.

The difficulty in determining CBO numbers is also due in part to the fact that many CBOs are not primarily adult-literacy providers. Many came into existence to serve other community needs, including job-counseling, child care, women's counseling, civil rights advocacy, or voter education. In many of these cases, literacy instruction was tacked on as a secondary activity, and it might later have become a primary activity as needs and interests became apparent. Recognizing the difficulty of identifying community based organizations providing adult basic skills services, ACBE estimates their number to be 3500 to 7000 nationwide, with 600-700,000 persons currently being served.[10]

Colleges and universities

Colleges and universities are, through the remedial programs they provide to their own students and to members of the surrounding community, one of the larger segments of the U.S. literacy field. The community college, in particular, has historically provided educational services to populations with lower levels of educational achievement than those served by four year colleges and universities. As such, the community college has had to deal with incoming students (up to one half of entering students, by one estimate[11]) whose basic skills are sufficiently weak to require remedial help.

Although precise figures for enrollment in these classes are not available, at present the U.S.'s 1,219 community colleges are the country's second largest provider of basic skills instruction. Four-year institutions also provide similar remedial help to their own students, and all of these higher institutions provide additional services through special adult education programs operating in nearby communities, factories, and other sites. In fact, in Wisconsin, Iowa, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington State, the community college systems are the sole vehicle for provision of the federally-funded Adult Basic Education services described above.[12] In ten other states,[13] community colleges provide a major share of the respective states' ABE services. Nationally, there is a general movement toward shifting of ABE services from school settings to community college settings. This is being done on the grounds that schools are, for many potential adult learners, associated with failure while, "going to college" carries a certain prestige and colleges are therefore seen as more appropriate contexts for adult learning activities.

Employee programs

Employers have increasingly been urged to consider how functional illiteracy within the workforce affects the productivity, safety, promotability, and morale of employees.[14] In response to such perceptions, and out of a need to maintain good employee relations, employers have established various forms of remedial education programs for their employees. These programs vary in form from simple referral systems to more sophisticated programs. In the former, employers simply refer workers to existing remedial programs in the community. In the latter, companies either work with educators from the community or hire training staff of their own to set up programs for the employees on or off company premises. Many of these latter programs use standard adult basic skills curricula commonly found in programs nationally. However, in a minority of these more elaborate programs, special curricula are designed which relate the literacy instruction directly to the literacy requirements which the employees face in their jobs.

These employee programs are sponsored by three categories of funding sources: employers (both corporate and non-corporate), unions, and job-training programs. In the first category, an estimated one quarter of the 210,000 largest U.S. companies include remedial basic skills education in their training programs. Polaroid Corporation, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts, the major automobile manufacturers, and other companies have operated programs for a number of years, and a growing number of other companies are showing an interest in doing so.

Non-corporate employers, most of whom are state and local governments, have likewise begun to establish remedial programs for their employees. The Kentucky state government, for example, offers a ten percent pay raise to state employees who earn their high school equivalency certificates. Maryland Highway Department workers participate in remedial education programs conducted by state adult education staff in Department sites around the state. The Civil Service Employees Association, which represents 300,000 state employees in New York, has developed a remedial education program to be aimed at the estimated 39 percent of its members who have reading skills below the eighth grade level. A growing number of city and state agencies have helped to organize conferences and research projects around the issue of workplace literacy; these efforts normally promote programs not only for corporate employees but for public-sector employees, as well.

Labor unions have also become increasingly active in setting up remedial programs for their members. One interpretation of this interest is that unions realize that, in an age of wage freezes and cut-backs, they can no longer so readily provide wage increases as they once did. The unions thus look for other, more obtainable benefits to provide to members, and educational programs are seen as one such benefit.[13]

Whatever their motivations, a number of unions have begun new basic skills efforts, or expanded existing ones, since the early 1980s in particular. These include the programs run by the United Auto Workers in partnership with the auto manufacturing companies. These auto-worker programs are an outgrowth of contractual agreements in the early to mid 1980s by which educational funds were created under joint control of the unions and the respective companies. These funds provide for a range of educational services for union members, and a large number of remedial programs have subsequently been established in auto plants nationally.

Other union-based efforts are those run by the eight unions participating in the Consortium for Worker Literacy in New York City. Eight local unions currently provide the range of basic skills services to 4000 union members in the city whose occupations include garment workers, exterminators, custodians, and others. This instruction is generally provided in collaboration with local educational institutions. In many cases, the instruction is linked directly to literacy skills required in jobs which the members currently hold or would like to apply for. A similar union consortium has now been started in Boston, and other individual unions, including the Seaman's International Union in Maryland and the hospital workers union in Philadelphia, operate remedial programs for their members. The AFL-CIO estimates that a growing number of labor unions nationally are now providing some sort of basic skills training for their employees. This growing interest is in response to the need to provide help to displaced workers and to the large numbers of new immigrants within some unions. Figures for numbers of union members involved in remedial programs are not available, largely due to inadequate resources for research.[16]

A third category of "employee" programs is that of the remedial basic skills programs which are part of job-training efforts for out-of-school youth and older adults. The vocational training field has historically swung back and forth between two views of where vocational training should focus its attention. One perspective holds that unemployed populations can benefit most from "hands-on," practically-oriented vocational training in such skills as carpentry, food-preparation, and health care. The alternative perspective argues that a broader training is needed which focuses on providing a foundation of generic reading, writing, mathematics, and problem-solving skills which the trainee can in turn apply in a wide range of occupational settings which might emerge in the future. Recent federal legislation seems to support the latter view, and the large bloc of job-training programs funded through the Job Training and Partnership Act are now being required to more fully integrate basic skills into their vocational training efforts.[17]

Correctional institutions

Currently, 700,000 adults are incarcerated in 47 federal, 6500 state, and 3500 local-level prisons and jails in the United States. An estimated 50 percent of inmates in state and federal institutions are considered to be functionally illiterate.

In the largest bloc of prisons, the 6500 state prisons and related facilities, the quantity and quality of basic education programs vary. In 1983, less than 12 percent of state prisoners had access to basic and vocational education opportunities, and, in the words of one report,

> . . . in a few state prisons education programs are highly developed, in most they are meager at best, and others range in between. In many instances, what is reported as "a program" may be no more than a workbook handed to a prisoner to use in his or her cell and an occasional meeting with an instructor.[18]

Another report claims that a key factor which shapes the quality of prison programs is that of the philosophy of the program:

> Is (the program) intended as a means of maintaining order and control, an antidote to debasing idleness, a way to help reduce recidivism rates, or of seeing to human needs a civilized society considers basic?[19]

The executive director of the Correctional Education Association claims that, because "there is no central agency responsible for gathering information about corrections education, . . . it is extremely difficult to get a handle on the whole picture."[20] As in most other segments of the literacy field, additional resources are called for to identify and develop effective means of overcoming the special problems of the population being served. These include inmate movement and turnover, lack of motivation among inmates, and lack of opportunities outside the prison walls.

Minority language programs

Up to one million persons, including undocumented aliens, enter the United States each year from other countries. Many of these immigrants not only do not speak English, but are illiterate in their own languages, as well. Hispanics, the largest bloc of the immigrant population, are estimated to have a functional illiteracy rate of 56 percent.[21]

A conglomeration of educational programs attempts to provide English as a second language (ESL), basic education in the native language (BENL),[22] vocational, and other services required by immigrant groups. These organizations include virtually all of the other literacy-providing organizations listed in this section which include immigrants, and some native-born Americans who come from non-English-speaking households, in the populations they serve. Other organizations which sponsor programs designed exclusively for this population include the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,[23] the U.S. Department of State's programs in overseas refugee camps,[24] and a limited number of Migrant Education programs aimed at migrant workers.[25]

Libraries

The public library is one public institution which has become centrally involved in many community and state-level literacy efforts. Of the 15,000 public libraries nationwide, an estimated 500 are currently providing some sort of literacy service. In most of these cases, libraries provide space where tutor-training and actual tutorial services are provided. Libraries also provide reading materials and refer community residents to other appropriate educational services within the community. Libraries frequently spearhead public awareness activities aimed at increasing the community's interest in reading. Some of these libraries allocate funds for one or more staff persons who are in charge of these literacy-related efforts. In many cases, libraries work with local LLA, LVA, or other literacy agencies to carry out these activities.

Libraries are seen as being particularly attractive to non-reading adults because they lack the stigma that the "school" setting carries for many adults lacking in basic skills. That is, non-reading adults might not mind being seen going into a library as much as they would mind being seen going into an adult basic education classroom. The library has the public image as a place for intelligent, literate activities, while the adult basic education program is often seen as a place for failures.

This involvement of the nation's libraries is largely an outgrowth of a push by the American Library Association (ALA). Since 1977, the ALA has encouraged its member libraries to establish remedial programs. ALA activites during this period have included dissemination of a literacy-program guidebook and the training of 1000 librarians in methods of establishing a library-based literacy program. The ALA also spearheaded the creation of the national Coalition for Literacy. Library efforts have also been encouraged at the national level through federal Library Service and Construction Act literacy grants. Literacy efforts at the state level have been developed in California, Oklahoma, Illinois, and other states through similar library-literacy grant programs.[26]

Religious organizations

Historically, religious organizations have played a central role in educational efforts around the world, including the establishment of literacy programs in Third World countries.[27] In the United States, religious-sector involvement has been less obvious, as the field has been more dominated by the above types of organizations. Nonetheless, congregations of individual churches and other religious organizations have been actively involved in many of the above efforts, particularly in the volunteer literacy realm.[28]

The religious group which has been most visible in literacy efforts nationwide is Lutheran Church Women, based in Philadelphia. LCW has a small Volunteer Reading Aides staff which provides training to a small number of LCW affiliates nationally. These affiliates in turn are normally integrated into a LLA, LVA, or other existing literacy organization in their respective communities. LCW also provides staff training to other, non-affilfate groups nationally, and generally serves an advocacy role in which it presents adult literacy as an issue of "social justice."[29]

Other national religious groups involved in literacy efforts are the Southern Baptist Convention[30] and Women's American Organization for Rehabilitation through Training.[31] The former group links its literacy work to its evangelical efforts. The latter organization is a national Jewish job-training service network which has since 1985 made literacy a focus for its affiliate organizations in its central-south region.

Military programs

Military personnel in George Washington's time received rudimentary literacy training,[32] and the U.S. Armed Services have continued that tradition to the present day. As technologies and technical training requirements have become more complex, remedial basic skills programs have become more common within the military. This training has increasingly shifted from a focus on general literacy skills to one which prepares personnel for the literacy requirements of specific military jobs. One unpublished Navy study conducted in 1983-84 indicated, for example, that more than 20 percent of recruits were unable to read at the ninth grade level, considered to be the minimum level required for dealing with technical manuals.[33]

By the early 1980s, 210,000 military personnel participated in an estimated 59 million hours of remedial instruction each year, at a cost of $70 million. In addition to more-traditional classroom formats, several special basic skills programs have been developed.[34] These include projects which rely on such electronic technologies as computer-assisted instruction, video discs, and hand-held computer "tutors."[35] The U.S. Department of Education has stated its intention of disseminating this military experience to the rest of the literacy field, as dictated by federal technology transfer policies.

Services for the disabled

According to one estimate,[36] fifteen percent (or 27 million) of Americans over the age of 16 can be considered disabled. These disabilities consist of impairments in mobility, sight, and hearing, as well as learning disabilities, mental retardation, and mental illness. Forty percent of that population has not finished high school, a figure nearly three times higher than the equivalent figure (15 percent) for the general population. Members of the disabled population are also twice as likely to fall below poverty levels than the general population.[37]

Of the 2.6 million adults participating in federal ABE programs in 1984, approximately 5 percent were disabled.[38] An additional unknown number of disabled adults participate in non-ABE programs. Educational services provided to these adults include the normal range of reading, writing, mathematics, and ESL instruction found in ABE programs. In addition, special courses related directly to managing specific disabilities and other vocational and counseling services are provided.

Advocates for educational services for disabled adults argue that disabled adults are a neglected minority in terms of basic skills education. This population has a greater need for services and is in fact under-represented in basic skills programs. It is also argued that a good number of adults currently enrolled in literacy programs are in fact learning disabled or have visual or auditory handicaps, but that programs are not aware of the presence of those disabilities or are incapable of diagnosing them and dealing with them in an appropriate way.[39]

The particular question of how prominently learning disablilities contribute to the current problem of adult illiteracy is a matter of continuing debate. Estimates for the frequency of learning disabilities in adult illiterates varies from 50 percent to much lower figures. The bulk of work in the area of learning disabilities has to date focused on child populations. Additional work is necessary to not only define the extent of the problem but to clarify how remedial instruction methods developed for learning disabled children can or cannot be adapted to adult populations.[40]

Proprietary programs

Proprietary programs are the for-profit training programs which historically have focused on short-term, vocational training objectives. Within this realm there is an unknown number of programs which focus on remedial education (especially GED) and ESL training. Some of these programs market their services in particular to company-sponsored employee education programs. Data on the number and effectiveness of these programs are not available, although proponents of the programs argue that, to remain in business in a competitive marketplace, the programs have to be sufficiently effective to keep their customers coming back.[41]

The Support Organizations

Intertwined with the above service providers is a range of "support organizations" which are charged with providing the field with such basic resources as planning and coordination, advocacy and public awareness, training, research, funding, and various forms of in-kind supports. Organized by the functions they serve, these support organizations are described below:

Planning and coordination

Each of the above-described categories of literacy providers has mechanisms for planning and coordinating the activities of its individual member agencies. In addition, there are considerable efforts at local, state, and national levels to coordinate the work of these various agencies. These organizations are normally also charged with increasing resources for the field via public awareness and advocacy activities, as well.

At the local level, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and other cities have established formal agencies within city government to coordinate the work of the agencies providing literacy services. These urban planning efforts are to some degree linked by the Urban Literacy Network[42] and otherwise given moral support from the U.S. Conference of Mayors[43] and the National League of Cities.[44]

At the state level, nearly half the states have instituted some form of mechanism for coordinating their respective literacy efforts. These state bodies have in turn been working with the Education Commission of the States,[45] the National Governors Association,[46] and other groups[47] of state officials to bring additional support to the literacy cause from high-level state policy makers.

At the national level, the Coalition for Literacy[48] consists of more than a dozen national organizations representing the above-described segments of the literacy field. Much of the Coalition's effort has gone into a media literacy awareness campaign launched in late 1984. This campaign has in turn overlapped considerably with the Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) campaign launched by the American Broadcasting Company and the Public Broadcasting Service[49] television and radio networks in 1986. PLUS aimed, initially, at creating local level "task force" coalitions to tie together and expand literacy services within communities nationwide. With those services in place, PLUS then aimed at increasing public awareness of the adult literacy issue via a series of documentaries, news-show segments, public service announcements, and other program formats. Viewers were invited to contact their local task forces or service providers to sign up as volunteers or as literacy students.

Most of these agencies aim, to some degree, at integrating literacy activities with other existing social services. Although the make-up of most of these bodies consists primarily of representatives from the literacy providing agencies, there are normally efforts to include non-literacy "types" in the work of these groups. These "types" include public policy makers; job-training personnel; leaders of business, religious, and ethnic organizations; and political figures. This is normally done by including those representatives as members of the groups or, in some cases, by organizing special cooperative activities between the coordinating agency and an outside agency.

Funding and in-kind assistance

The largest single bloc of adult literacy funding comes from the federal and matching state funds filtered through the Adult Basic Education system described above. Other governmental funding sources include the federal refugee and immigrant education programs, public libraries, correctional institutions, military programs, job-training programs, and handicapped services described above. In recent years, as demand for services has grown and public funding has tended to remain at the same level, the literacy field has increasingly turned to the "private sector" for resources.

This private sector includes corporations, foundations, and voluntary groups. These private sources provide not only financial contributions to programs, but a wide range of "in-kind" help, as well. This in-kind assistance takes the forms of technical advice, volunteer tutors, printing services, free meeting space, computer equipment, and other material aid needed to keep a program going. There is at present no way of estimating the amount of such private sector aid going into the literacy field, although the number of companies involved appears to be growing. This increase is apparently due to the increased public awareness coverage given to the literacy issue, as well as to the increase in direct appeals to private sources from individual literacy organizations.[50]

Research

Darkenwald[51] and Harman[52] have found that much of what passes for research in the adult literacy field is anecdotal and not particularly systematic in nature. The more systematic research that does exist tends to be seen by many practitioners as academic and irrelevant to practitioners' everyday concerns.

Whatever its merits or lack thereof, most literacy research has come primarily from federal and state planning bodies or from university-based educational research bodies. The Adult Performance Level study,[53] the National Adult Literacy Project studies,[54] the studies disseminated by the

ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Adult Education,[55] and the National Assessment of Educational Progress studies[56] are examples of federally-funded literacy research projects, many of which, in turn, were based at university research institutions. The planning documents prepared by local and state level literacy planning agencies are other examples, normally aiming at generating support for literacy efforts at those levels.[57]

Beyond the question of how relevant these studies are to practitioners, there is an ongoing concern within the field regarding how the results of these studies are disseminated and used. Currently, many of these studies are disseminated primarily in book form, which are beyond the budgets and time available to many literacy personnel. Calls are thus made within the field for practically-oriented research which in turn would then be made widely available to practitioners and policy makers through training, concise publications, and other mechanisms.

Training

As in the case of research, the training provided to adult literacy personnel is often criticized as being of limited relevance, of limited quality, or nearly non-existent.[58] In the case of the full- or part-time professionals, what training is given is commonly provided in the estimated 65 college-based adult basic education teacher training programs nationwide.[59] Many of these adult education programs have only limited ranges of courses related specifically to adult literacy per se.

In response to the demand for tutor-training generated by PLUS, the volunteer agencies have responded with a major increase in training activities. These normally consist of short pre-service courses and brief in-service training sessions.[60]

The training of both professional and volunteer practitioners frequently focuses on a selected teaching method, without a broader consideration of alternative instructional approaches, management practices, and the array of social and political issues which affect the course of literacy efforts. The limited quantity and quality of the training provided to literacy practitioners is of concern to many observers of the field.[61]

Instructional materials

The instructional materials used in the range of literacy programs come from both commercial[62] and non-commercial[63] sources. They take the forms of not only the familiar textbook format but teacher- and student-produced materials, computer-assisted instructional software,[64] and video and audio presentations.[65]

SECTION II:
FORMS OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

Chapter II presented a range of opinions on the purposes served by "participatory" instructional and management practices. These practices are seen as an alternative to the more common, "traditional" approaches which tend to dominate the field. In the case of instruction, the more common approach is that of "programmed learning," in which the learner is expected to master information provided by the instructor. In the case of management, the learner has historically been seen more as a client in an operation controlled by paid or volunteer program staff. In reality, most programs have elements of both traditional and participatory approaches, although the traditional approaches tend to dominate most programs.[64]

Participatory Practices Within the Instructional Component

Literacy programs have established a variety of practices which aim at expanding the learner's role in what has traditionally been seen as the "instructional" component of literacy program activities. This instructional component is here further divided into "planning and evaluation" of instructional activities and "implementation" of those activities. Within each of those aspects of the instructional process, participatory practices have been developed, as described below:

Planning and Evaluation of Instruction

Planning of instruction

In programs which consciously attempt to involve learners in planning of instructional activities, learners' roles range from selecting topics, materials, and activities designed by others, to developing topics, materials, and activities on their own or in collaboration with others. The latter roles provide the learner with relatively more reponsibility and control in the planning process. In both cases, however, the learner has a more active role than in the more familiar, "programmed learning" situation in which learners are handed a prescribed set of topics, materials, and activities which they are expected to master in order to fulfill instructional objectives pre-determined by program staff.

Three common approaches to literacy instruction foster either the above-described "selecting" role or "developing" role (or a combination of both) for the learner. In the competency-based approach, the learner is sometimes encouraged to identify topic areas which have personal meaning, particularly those areas in which the learner feels that improved reading and writing skills might be of some help. Once a particular competency area has been identified, the instructor commonly then brings in prepared materials and activities which learners are helped to incorporate into their thinking, as a way of helping them to develop a "competency" in each of the selected areas of interest. The amount of input which learners have in competency-based programs varies considerably. In some cases, learners merely choose from a prepared "menu" of topics, while in other cases learners are encouraged to come up with topics entirely on their own.

In the language-experience approach to reading and writing instruction, learners not only identify topics of personal interest and select existing printed materials, such as sports news or romance stories, around which to practice reading skills; they also develop their own written materials by preparing essays, poems, stories, reports, and other written materials around those personally-meaningful topics. The learners' role in this case is thus not only one of "selecting" from among prepared materials but actually developing their own written materials.

A third approach, here termed the social change approach, resembles the language-experience approach in that it encourages learners to both select from existing materials and to develop their own written materials. The social change approach differs from the language-experience approach, however, in the stress which the social change approach places on enabling the learner to develop a socially critical consciousness along with what are considered the more mechanical aspects of reading and writing skills.[67]

In practice, some programs use a mixture of these instructional approaches. A program with a "social change" perspective might in some cases take a more "competency-based" approach when focusing on a particular topic area expected by a funding source or an examination board. If for example students in a program want to pass a citizenship test and that test requires the student to be able to answer specific technical questions about the U.S. Constitution, a social change practitioner would very possibly use a prepared study guide as an instructional material for those students. A competency-based practitioner would be less likely to use a social change approach to planning the curriculum, as a social change approach by definition requires a particular political perspective which practitioners adhering to a strict competency-based approach are not likely to have.

In programs using one or more of the above approaches, learners are encouraged to actively participate in planning and evaluating their instructional activities in a variety of ways. For example, some teachers in the ESL program at New York City's Riverside Church have adapted Charles

Curran's "Counseling-Learning" approach[48] to allow personally-meaningful topics to emerge from the language used by the immigrant participants. In their initial meetings, learners sit in a circle with a tape recorder and, with the teacher's help, conduct a conversation with their limited English-language skills. Using the tape of their conversation, the instructor then goes back through what was said, phrase by phrase, having the learners repeat their respective contributions. From these initial discussions emerges a record of the verbal English skills which they have already developed, along with personal themes and language needs around which further exercises can be developed.

At The Door, a multi-service center for youth in Manhattan,[49] staff historically encouraged learners to develop critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is defined by one staff member as "the art of asking questions, not taking anything for granted." These skills are developed along with more-mechanical reading and writing skills by posing a "Question of the Week" around which learners write essays. These questions aim at "problematizing" various current issues, in a way which is to challenge the learners to develop their abilities to look at various sides of the reality which they faced on a day-to-day basis, as well as issues of larger, global concern. For example, for the 1985 "International Year of Youth," learners were asked to respond to the question "If you could write to any international leader, who would it be and what would you say?" Another social issue, that of education, was dealt with via the question "If you had the chance to create your own community-based school, what would it look like?" Other questions focused on more-personal experience, such as "Where did you grow up?" and "What street games do they play in your neighborhood?" After a year of such staff-developed questions, however, learners themselves showed an interest in developing their own questions. In response, staff asked learners to write five questions of particular personal importance. The resulting learner-produced questions tended to focus on more-immediate -- rather than global -- concerns, like drugs, housing, and jobs.

At the Continuing Education Institute outside Boston,[70] new learners are asked to analyze what they have already learned in their jobs and in their lives. In this way, learners identify positive skills upon which additional reading and writing instruction can be based. The learner writes an essay on each of the personal skills identified and in turn is given credit toward a high school diploma for each essay which demonstrates writing and technical skills.

At the Push Literacy Action Now (PLAN) program in Washington, D.C.,[71] learners are told from the start that they are expected to help develop the curriculum. To do so, learners select materials from the program's resource center and every eight weeks work in groups to set their own learning goals -- as a group and as individuals.

In the remedial "English 001" course at the Staten Island campus of the City University of New York,[72] students are asked to prepare lists and essays identifying themes of personal importance to themselves. The instructor then organizes those themes into groups and asks the students to prioritize them by vote, according to level of concern. In the fall 1986 semester, drugs, sex education, and abortion were the three areas of greatest concern. Reading and writing activities are then based on those student-identified themes.

In the LVA "Read All About It" program,[73] learners are encouraged to identify topics of personal interest to themselves. Tutors are then expected to find corresponding reading materials in local newspapers, and the tutor and student practice reading those selected materials.

The ESL program of the Literacy Volunteers of Northwest Suburban Cook[74] (in Buffalo Grove, Illinois) uses a combination of standard curriculum materials, outside speakers, and materials identified by students themselves. Those student-identified materials have included motorcycle manuals and menus from restaurants where students work.

The Illinois ESL/Adult Education Service Center[75] advises ESL instructors to use a "mapping" technique with learners as a way of eliciting themes around which language activities can be based. Learners are to draw a map of the community sites where they carry out their daily activities. A typical map might thus include a grocery store, bus stop, friend's house, work site, home, school, and post office. Each learner is then interviewed by the instructor and by fellow students, to elicit information on such personal interests as the make-up of their families, what they do at their jobs, and where and how they typically are expected to use English. Through such exercises, learners identify themes which serve as the basis for subsequent discussion.

Evaluation of instruction

Not only are learners in these and other ways being encouraged to actively participate in the initial planning of instructional activities; they are also being given the opportunity to evaluate those activities. Bronx Educational Services,[76] for example, encourages regular, informal feedback from learners with such questions as "How do you feel about this?"

The Jefferson County Adult Reading Program[77] has students meet weekly with the professional teacher who supervizes the program's volunteer tutors. In those sessions, students assess their progress and modify their learning plan.

In the remedial program at the Ford Motor plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan,[78] learners keep records of their attendance and of the materials which they have read and written. They are also at regular intervals asked to record anecdotes about experiences inside and outside the class. In all of these cases, the learners are in effect being encouraged to take responsibility for, and think critically about, their own experiences in the program.

At The Door in New York City,[79] learners have been asked to record their respective assessments of the various computer software packages being used in the program. These assessments were entered directly into the students' personal computer journals, and eventually reviewed en masse as part of a year-long participatory evaluation of those software products.

Project Second Chance, at the Contra Costa County Library in California,[80] has been developing an evaluation system in which students will telephone other students to ask them to confidentially identify problems and elicit suggestions for how the program can be improved.

At Push Literacy Action Now,[81] learners sometimes make decisions about such sensitive topics as whether a particular learner should be allowed to remain in the class.

In many programs, learners are encouraged to give input into decisions about such logistical concerns as program schedules.[82] Students also plan such special educational activities as guest speakers[83] and field trips.[84]

Implementation of Instruction

In addition to planning and evaluating their programs' instructional activities, learners are taking active roles in the actual implementation of instruction. These "implementation" roles can be grouped under the headings of "learners as teachers," "learners as writers," "participatory reading activities," "field trips," and "learners as artists" as follows:

Learners as teachers

Learners are taking on the role of "teacher" to fellow program participants who are either at a lower skill level or at the same level. In the former case, learners who have successfully passed through a program, or at least to a higher skill level within the program, serve as instructors to other learners in the same program or in another program. In Philadelphia, for example, a GED graduate of the Women's Program at Lutheran Settlement House went on to serve as an instructor and assistant director in that program, and subsequently worked as an instructor in the Center for Literacy and as director of the Neighborhood Education Project.[85] Likewise, a former GED student at Philadelphia's Sanctuary Bible Institute now has returned to tutor other students at the Institute.[86]

In introductory sessions at Bronx Educational

Services,[87] learners are urged to see the importance of helping one's fellow learners. In those sessions, learners are asked by the staff: "How many of you are there? How many of us? Since there are a lot more of you than of us, we're going to need your help." This notion of peer-helping is also discussed in another session which deals with the notion of "life learning." In that session, learners are asked to look at the many ways that family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers help them to learn things, and vice versa. They are asked: "How did you learn to do your job?" or "How did you learn how to take care of your baby?" Learners see that the average person thus relies heavily on others for acquisition of knowledge, and BES stresses that learners are expected to likewise work cooperatively with fellow learners for mutual growth. A clear manifestation of this philosophy is the program's use of former students as para-teachers in almost every class.

Within the refugee-education segment of the literacy field,[88] the notion of Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) supports the use of refugee-group members as helpers of fellow refugees from that ethnic group. In practice, refugees who have recently passed through a survival ESL program sponsored by a MAA are often taken on by the program as peer-instructors.

An increasingly popular notion is that of "family reading" projects which provide reading instruction activities for both children and adults from the same household. These programs have been developed in response to the perceived problem of "intergenerational transfer of illiteracy," in which illiterate parents tend to produce illiterate children. Family reading programs are also a response to the stated desires of many adult non-readers to be able to read to their children or grandchildren and to be able to help the children with their homework. Exact make-up of these programs varies from program to program. Many, however, have the adults not only learning to read but in turn practicing those skills through reading of stories to their children, using the library together, or helping their children with their homework.[89]

As stated above, learners also help fellow learners having roughly the same skill levels as they do. This peer-teaching goes on in pairs or in small groups, either of which can be formally set up by program administrators or less formally by learners in an ad hoc response to a felt interest on their part. Atlanta's Literacy Action program, for example, switched from a one-to-one tutorial format to a small-group format. The program director claimed that, through sharing of their needs and strengths, "the students tend to reinforce each other. . . . They help each other through the crises."[90]

In the ESL program run by the Literacy Volunteers of Northwest Suburban Cook County (in Buffalo Grove, Illinois),[91] immigrant students work cooperatively with each other in Saturday conversation groups. After an initial period in which the groups were led by tutors, students have taken on greater degrees of leadership and control. Group members now do most of the talking that goes on in the group. They also identify what will be discussed the following week and provide a great deal of moral support to each other.

Founders of the ESL program at New York's Riverside Church[92] set up the program with the assumption that the immigrant students would have a lot to give to American society. The staff also hoped to foster peaceful co-existence within the classroom among students from a wide range of nationalities, some of which were in conflict with each other "back home." To accomplish these philosophical goals, instructions are structured to enhance cooperation and trust among group members. In one such case, students in one class will be prepared to go into another class to conduct a lesson around a particular theme. Staff hope that, with such activities, learners will increase their confidence in their language skills.

In San Francisco's Project Literacy,[93] learners worked in Freirian-style "circles" to investigate issues which they identified as of personal importance to them. In one case, transportation was the focus, and learners identified such sub-questions as "Who runs the bus company?" and "Why have fares increased?" Learners worked as a team to carry out research on these questions, and subsequently wrote letters to various officials to communicate the circle's findings and concerns.

Learners as writers

Many programs see writing as an area of literacy instruction which is particularly suited to developing active thinking and self-expression among students. In practice, the following types of writing activities have been developed:

Newsletters. One of the more common media for development of student writing skills is the program newsletter. This can come in a "mixed" format, which contains articles by students, staff, and others involved in the program. Alternatively, in some cases, the newsletter can be a publication prepared primarily or solely by students themselves. Examples of each type of newsletter include:

- "Mixed" newsletters. The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News is a Tennessee-based newsletter which runs a column entitled ""From a Student's Point of View." One column[94] featured "Three Letters from Putnam County," in which learners described the personal rewards they had gained from their literacy program.

Washington Literacy's *Literacy News* has run a column entitled "A Student's Point of View." In one issue,[75] a student described the problems she encountered as an illiterate and the rewards she gained in the college program in which she was now participating. She also described her participation in literacy-awareness coverage by a local public television station and as a speaker in a literacy hearing in the state legislature. She closed with words of encouragement to other students and of thanks to her teachers.

The *Read On...* newsletter of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia has run a "Guest Editorial"[76] in which a successful student described his own experiences in several remedial programs in the city. He thanked those who had helped them and encouraged other prospective students: "*Do not give up*. You can make it if you try. Don't worry about where you are but where you would like to be."

- *"All-student" newsletters*. *The Green Mountain Eagle* calls itself "A newspaper by and for Vermont's Adult Education students." Published by the state's Adult Basic Education office, it has featured student-written stories on such topics as whether a woman is capable of being a volunteer firefighter, "Divorce," "How to Survive a Vermont Winter," "Brother Dies of Cancer," "A Fortune Teller," and recipes for inexpensive snacks, entitled "Keeping Your Budget Down."[97]

The EdTech Voice calls itself "a forum of critical thought addressing issues affecting today's youth." The newsletter is produced by learners participating in the remedial education program of The Door. Learners write about topics which they themselves have a major say in selecting, and enter their essays, letters, poems, and stories into the program's computers. In some cases, students in the graphic arts program produce computer-assisted graphics for inclusion in the visually-attractive newsletter. Topics dealt with in various issues have included apartheid, problems in school, unrequited love, irresponsible world leaders, an ideal neighborhood, and letters written by students in Lesotho about their own concerns and hopes.[98]

Bronx Educational Services' Monthly Planet newsletter features student-written poetry with titles like "Why I Love New York." In an "Inquiring Photographer" column, students also express opinions on a given topic, such as "What does writing mean to you?" A "Bilingual Corner" contains personal stories prepared by students, some in Spanish and some in English. A "Dear Doc" advice column allows students to write in with questions which are in turn answered by staff members.[99]

Letter-writing. Many literacy program participants claim that one reason for their joining programs is so that they will be able to write letters to friends and relatives. Many programs are, in response to such interests, using letter-writing as a focus for reading and writing instruction. In these programs, learners write letters to pen pals, tutors, and active or potential supporters of the program. Examples include:

* Pen pals. Programs have introduced pen pal programs in which learners correspond either with fellow students in other programs or with others outside the program who are not themselves students. In a project at Drake University,[100] adult low-level readers from around the country are being linked together in a pen pal network. In its "Green Mountain Eagle" student newletter,[101] the Vermont state Adult Basic Education office is publishing the names, addresses, and a brief biographical statement of students who would like to correspond by mail. Readers are invited to write to those listed.

* Letters to program staff and supporters. A student in an Oregon literacy program wrote a note of thanks to her tutor which was later described in the national newsletter of Laubach Literacy International.[102] In the letter, the student described the difficulty of making the

initial phone call to ask for assistance. The student credited her tutor with helping to give her the "tools of life" and the self-confidence she needed to go on to college.

A student in the Memphis Literacy Council program likewise wrote a letter of thanks to the Council's board members, saying that "It is wouldful (sic) to know that someone cares about helping people learn to read better."[103]

Writers' workshops. Another writing-instruction format in which learners are given opportunities for active participation is that of the "writers' workshop." Philadelphia's Center for Literacy has held concurrent workshops in which, on one hand, tutors are trained in ways of teaching writing while, on the other hand, students develop ways of practicing writing and using it outside the classroom. In the student workshops, "students discussed their feelings about writing and why writing is so difficult. Meeting with others who found writing hard surprised some students: they thought they were the only ones who couldn't do it." After these discussions, the students sat and practiced writing. "Many students who lacked writing confidence before were surprised at how much they could write. In fact, some didn't want to stop writing." The staff who coordinated the workshops subsequently noted an increase among many student participants in the amount of personal writing which they are doing.[104]

In another variation of this workshop format, the Centers for Reading and Writing, sponsored by the New York Public Library, incorporate writing exercises into the initial training sessions provided to mixed groups of new students and tutors. These introductory sessions aim at letting students and tutors get to know each other as readers and writers. In those sessions, both students and tutors are asked to write their reactions to what is going on in the training, particularly the activities which put them in the roles of readers and writers. These reactions are recorded in "dialogue journals" which are then handed in to the staff member serving as group leader. The leader then reviews the journals and writes a note to the writers. Program staff feel that students in particular seem to respond well to getting a note written to them at the end of each session.[105]

Writing awards. As learners develop their writing skills, some programs and support organizations are sponsoring awards competitions for student writers. In the state of Pennsylvania, a 1985 statewide contest sponsored by the state Department of Education gave awards for poems and stories submitted by students in programs across the state. Winning entries were published in an anthology entitled Our

Words, Our Voices, Our World.[106] In another case in Pennsylvania, poetry prepared by four participants in a remedial program in Philadelphia's Northwest Mental Health Center was included in a "Great Voices" event sponsored by the American Poetry Center.[107]

Use of word processors. Current uses of computers for literacy instruction are often criticized on the grounds that most existing instructional technologies do not go beyond emphasizing drill-and-practice exercises in which the learner plays a fairly passive, uncreative role. In such cases, critics claim, the computers serves as mere "electronic workbooks."[108] Some programs are, however, trying to get away from such uses of computers and instead use them as means for teaching creative writing, critical thinking, and other active language skills.

One such effort is the EdTech Project being conducted at The Door in New York City. Learners in that project use word processors to prepare stories which are then printed out in a newwsletter form and also on an electronic bulletin board which is broadcast over a local cable television network.[109] The program states its case for more-creative uses of computer-assisted instruction as follows:

> . . . studies done over the past few years have indicated that programs targeting at-risk students which focus primarily on remediation of academic skills through rote memorization, while overlooking basic principles of human development fundamental to the long-term success of all young

> adults, are ineffective. What appears to be of more importance is the need to help at-risk youth reestablish bonds with groups of people, learn principles of self-management and responsible social interaction, and make fundamental changes in the way they see themselves and the social world. These studies have pointed to the need to avoid "passive" uses of computers and too great a reliance on drill-and-practice courseware. They indicate the appropriateness of interactive courseware that requires students to think, to actively work with and integrate information and to draw out meaning rather than merely to memorize. This kind of active learning approach is even more critical in the light of future employment trends which indicate a substantial decrease in the availability of jobs that only require the repetition of a simple skill, and point to the increasing need for individuals to be able to change job positions, apply skills to new situations and to learn new skills.[110]

In another New York City project, learners participating in a program in the Hispanic "El Barrio" community of East Harlem will be using computers to transmit printed messages to fellow learners in other programs. The idea behind the program is that learners become interested in learning how to write when they see that writing has a useful purpose: in this case, corresponding with another person. In one special project, these students will be beaming messages around the theme of world peace via satellite to students in the Soviet Union.[111]

Staff members in programs which use word processors for student writing frequently claim that, in addition to providing the benefits of increased creativity and critical thinking, computers can provide the additional advantage of producing a high-quality printed message which could not be produced by many adult basic skills students if they were to write the same message by hand. Learners thus produce professional-looking products, while at the same time feeling that they are learning an up-to-date, high-status, advanced technology which might enhance their future job prospects.

Writing of functional texts. In this case, learners focus their writing on specific "functional" literacy materials, many of which are job-related. For example, learners in the Camp Hill State Correctional Institution program in Pennsylvania fill out sample job applications which are then reviewed by staff in the personnel department of the local Book of the Month Club office which serves as a corporate sponsor of the literacy program. The personnel staff review the practice applications, realistically evaluate them in terms of how well they communicate the learners' qualifications, and then return the applications so that the learners can go over them with their tutors.[112]

Participatory reading activities

Much of current reading instruction practice is criticized as being, for the learner, almost inherently passive in nature. Some programs have tried to counter this by introducing participatory curriculum planning and evaluation activities. But once learners have identified topics and works of interest to themselves, the reading activities which follow still tend to keep the learner in a relatively passive role of merely reading what someone else has produced.

One attempt to provide learners with a more active role in the reading instruction process is that of the Book Clubs developed by Cleveland's Project: LEARN.[113] The Clubs have learners meeting regularly under the supervision of a volunteer discussion leader to discuss a book which they have selected and read in common. In the process, learners have gradually learned that there can be more than one interpretation of a story, and that "Reading is no longer something you 'study', it's something you 'do'." Club members have also participated in local literacy awareness news coverage and have travelled to statewide and national conferences to make presentations about the Book Club idea. In a few cases, participants have brought family members to join in with Club discussions.

The project aims at not only encouraging readers to want to read on their own, but also at overcoming the isolation which separates learners from each other. The Book Clubs also were intended to give learners practice in actually sharing ideas with others, a stated goal of most literacy efforts. It was hoped, as well, that participants would show an increase in their "independent and cooperative problem solving" abilities and in their "positive self-concept."

Field trips

Field trips are another device which serve instructional purposes for learners, either directly related to the topics being dealt with in the curriculum or as less-formal, "extra-curricular" activities. In these trips, learners get away from the instructional site and explore educational topics and uses of literacy in a "different" setting.

In one such case, members of a Philadelphia student support group attended a showing of the Broadway musical Dreamgirls. The program newsletter described the effects on the students as follows: "For many it was the first experience with live theater. Seeing a play and reading the Playbill gave the students a chance to learn outside the classroom."[114] Students from the same program also took a trip to a local television station, where they observed the taping of a television program.

In another case in Philadelphia, students from the New Hope Learning Center visited the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum to hear poetry and prose read by respected authors Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, and Margaret Walker.[115] Also in that city, Russian immigrant ESL students in the George Washington High School Literacy Center as a group visited Independence Hall, the Liberty

Bell, the American Museum of Jewish History, and other cultural and historical sites.[116]

Learners as artists

Programs have also developed a variety of learning activities which foster learner creativity and other language and thinking skills. While many of these activities do not formally qualify as "writing" per se, they contain many of the elements of the writing process. These include conceptualizing and transforming an idea into a form which can be understood by others. These artistic activities include drawing, role-playing, and photographic and video presentations. Examples include:

Drawing. The Camp Hill State Correctional Institution sponsored a fall 1985 drawing competition for the 69 participants in its literacy program. Contestants were invited to draw a logo which depicted the name ("Time to Read") and purpose of the program. Fifty entries were submitted, with some learners contributing as many as five entries apiece. The designs of eleven finalists were refined by a drafting instructor at the prison. The winning designs were displayed in the newsletter of the national Time to Read program (which is sponsored by Time Inc.) and covered in a television news report in nearby Harrisburg.[117]

Role-playing. Learners are being called on to convey messages to participants in various training and literacy-conference situations. New tutors and students being introduced to the program sponsored by the Centers for Reading and Writing (at the New York Public Library) observe current students and staff act out typical instructional situations and then discuss what they have observed.[118] Learners who participated in the 1986 national conferences of LLA and LVA incorporated role-playing into presentations which they made to general audiences at the conferences. In one session at the Laubach conference, entitled "Tutors: Listen to Your Students," a student portrayed a well-intentioned but insensitive tutor who didn't listen to the needs expressed by a beginning-level student.[119] At the LVA conference, teams of students planned, rehearsed, and enacted various skits which focused on student-identified concerns, such as how illiteracy affects job prospects and the "invisible" nature of the illiterate.[120] Students and staff of Bronx Educational Services worked with an acting company which is housed in the same building, to develop a play which is based on oral-history writings of students in the program; this play was presented at the end-of-year commencement exercises and at other program sites as well.[121]

Photo and video presentations. A number of programs have used videotaping equipment for instructional purposes. In one case, the Mothers Program of the American Reading Council[122] has had students videotape themselves discussing their own personal experiences. These tapes, in turn, were used as the focus of further discussion and writing activities. Lutheran Settlement House[123] developed a photo-essay activity around the theme of "women and the world of work." Students visited women at their worksites and photographed them at work. The resulting photographs were to serve as the basis for a series of student-written articles around the theme of women as workers. Students in the Banana Kelly program[124] in the Bronx have prepared dialogue and photos for a special slide-tape presentation which describes their program, in which job, life skills, and basic skills training are combined. This presentation is to be shown to high school students and other audiences.

Participatory Practices Within the Management Component

Learner participation practices are likewise being used in many of the other, non-instructional program activities which we here term "management" activities. Our survey[125] has identified the following management areas in which learner participation practices are currently being implemented:

1. Public awareness and advocacy
2. Program governance
3. Learner recruitment and intake
4. Learner support activities
5. Conferences
6. Community development
7. Program staffing
8. Income generation
9. Staff recruitment and training

Note that in some cases a participatory activity might fall into more than one of the above categories. Also, when viewed in a "holistic" sense, all of the above types of activities can be viewed as "educational" in that they help the learner to develop useful skills; thus, labelling them as "management" activities, something apart from the "instructional" activities described earlier, is somewhat artificial. With that understood, however, these "management" categories will be used here for the sake of clarity. Examples from these nine management categories are described below:

Public awareness and advocacy

As described in Chapter I, the period of 1984-87 was characterized by a major push by the literacy field to increase general public awareness of the literacy issue and to generate new literacy resources from the public and private sectors. Learners themselves were during this period often called upon to serve as public spokespersons for the literacy field. Because of the attention which the accompanying media coverage has brought to the literacy field, it is in this area of public awareness and advocacy that there is greatest evidence of learner participation.

Public awareness. The following examples demonstrate the range of ways in which learners have taken active roles in public awareness activities:

* News coverage. Learners have appeared in a wide range of television and radio broadcasts, from the national PBS documentary A Chance to Learn[126] and a session of the ABC Nightline show,[127] to segments on National Public Radio's Readers' Radio program,[128] to local television interviews conducted with learners attending a regional literacy conference,[129] to local-level news coverage of students in local programs,[130] to learner participation in news conferences launching awareness campaigns at the national[131] and local levels.[132] The print media have likewise called on learners for interviews which have appeared in a large number of national[133] and local-level magazines and newspapers.[134] In the case of Push Literacy Action Now in Washington, D.C., the program director encourages students to participate in various forms of media

coverage and in fact makes it a policy that he not participate in such coverage unless a student is involved as well.[135]

Learners have also been featured in stories appearing in literacy program newsletters[136] which in turn are distributed not only internally to program staff and students but to such "outsiders" as media sources, public officials, private-sector funders, and others.

* Public speaking. Learners have been asked to speak in various forums whose purposes include public awareness of the literacy problem. These meetings have involved a wide range of audiences, ranging from statewide multi-sector literacy conferences,[137] a city-wide forum in Chicago,[138] the National Issues Forum sponsored by the Kettering Foundation,[139], high school students in Sacramento[140] and in the Bronx[141] who were told by a former adult illiterate about the need to study hard, the state conference of Literacy Volunteers of Connecticut,[142] and a national conference of PBS station directors.[143]

Advocacy. In addition to participating in activities aimed at general awareness, learners have also been serving as public advocates or lobbyists, with the more-specific intention of generating additional material resources for literacy efforts. Examples include Chicago's Hispanic

Council on Literacy, which serves as an advocacy group for Hispanic literacy programs. The Council's president is herself a graduate of a local Hispanic literacy program of which she is now program director.[144]

In another example, students in the state of Washington have testified on the need for literacy funding before the Washington State Temporary Committee on Educational Policies.[145] Kentucky students have likewise testified before the state general assembly,[146] and a Sacramento student testified before the California state senate on behalf of a "Families for Literacy" bill.[147] In Tennessee, six students from the Opportunity for Adult Reading Program in the town of Cleveland and the Rhea County literacy program participated in an April 1986 statewide literacy workshop which was organized by U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper's Legislative Task Force on Literacy.[148] Students in the ESL program at Manhattan's Riverside Church conducted a letter-writing campaign to public policy makers when Refugee Assistance funding was cut.[149] Bronx Educational Services students testified before the National Advisory Council on Adult Education.[150] And students from the Bronx-based Banana Kelly program have testified on behalf of youth training programs at public budget hearings.[151]

In another case of involving learners in advocacy activities, Literacy Volunteers of Chicago has been considering institution of a student policy-discussion group. This group would discuss community problems and, it is hoped, move on to the next step of developing further corrective action in the community itself.[152] In several other states,[153] plans have been developed (and, in some cases, implemented) to include one or more positions for literacy students on state- or local-level literacy planning bodies which make recommendations on such matters as funding of literacy efforts.

Program governance

Learners have also become involved in bodies whose stated purpose is that of allowing learners to have a greater share in making decisions about program policies and activities. Boards of directors and student advisory councils are the most common mechanisms for learners to participate in program governance. Examples include:

Boards of directors. The literacy programs of the Brooklyn Public Library;[154] Cleveland's Project: LEARN;[155] Literacy Volunteers of St. Lawrence County, New York;[156] Bronx Educational Services;[157] Literacy Volunteers of Northwest Suburban Cook County;[158] and Washington's Push Literacy Action Now[159] are just a few of the growing number of programs which have current students serving on their boards of directors. The statewide Florida Literacy Coalition[160] and the Contra Costa County Library[161] each have slots for one former student to serve on their boards of directors. These programs vary in how these student board members are selected, with some students being elected by fellow students to the position and, in other cases, the student member being appointed by other board members. Students' roles on these boards also vary, with students in some cases being assigned very specific roles, such as "publicity" or "student relations."

Student advisory councils. These groups vary in how much input they have from program staff. Generally, however, they serve to provide feedback to program staff and administrators about particular student concerns, without necessarily having any authority to effect corresponding changes in program policy or practice. In the Spartanburg AWARE program in South Carolina, for example, a student advisory group identified isolation as a problem of the one-to-one tutorial format. Program administrators in turn were to consider how that problem could be effectively dealt with.[162] Push Literacy Action Now [163] has an "Education Committee" composed of half students and half teachers, which discusses program needs in general and the issue of how to more actively involve learners in particular. The Literacy Volunteers program in the Brooklyn Public

Library[164] has a student council whose meetings are coordinated, to some degree, by program staff. In one such meeting, the staff coordinator followed a prepared lesson plan, leading learners through a reading interest inventory. In the process, learners identified interests around which future instructional activities were to be focused.

Learner recruitment and intake

As described in Chapter II, there is a common sense among practitioners that students themselves are particularly effective as recruiters of potential students from within their own communities. To take advantage of that student strength, programs have involved current and former students in recruitment and intake activities in the following ways:

Recruitment. Students in the Austin Career Education Center in Chicago are reported to use word-of-mouth to do 98 percent of the recruiting of new students for the program.[165] The Kentucky Educational Television GED program surveyed participants in its Texas program and found that nearly half of them heard about the program from students already participating in the program.[166] California Literacy instituted a group entitled "Illiterates Anonymous" which held publicly-announced meetings at a local library. The group was meant to provide a forum for discussion and peer-support among prospective students. Questions regarding the program were discussed and interested students were signed up for the program.[167] Other programs report similar recruitment mechanisms, although many state that recruitment is not a large concern for them because they already have more prospective students on waiting lists than the program can effectively serve.

Intake. Intake procedures include welcoming and orienting of new students to the program, often with an emphasis on clarifying student needs and expectations vis-a-vis program purposes and capacities. "Veteran" students are often called on to help with these intake procedures, as illustrated in the following examples:

A student group in the Bradley County Schools Volunteer Literacy program in Tennessee welcomed a newly-recruited student to one of its early-1986 meetings. The new student "received much advice and encouragement from the other students, who stressed that he should not give up, should do his homework, and should have confidence in the tutor and the material he would study."[168]

Two successful learners in the Spartanburg AWARE program spoke to newly-recruited learners at a Student Orientation meeting in mid-1986. The veteran students encouraged the newcomers and "shared personal thoughts and feelings and answered questions."[169]

The Brooklyn Public Library Literacy Volunteers program sends newly-recruited learners a letter inviting them to attend the next meeting of the Student Council, so that the new learners can be officially welcomed. The letter, which the learners presumably might read with the help of a relative or friend, reads:

> We would like you to attend this meeting so that you can be part of things even before your tutoring begins. We want to get to know you and give you a chance to meet other students and hear their concerns and successes in the program. . . . One of the members of the Student Council will be your buddy. You can exchange telephone numbers and really stay in touch about things . . . [170]

An Hispanic student in the Maverick County Literacy Council in Texas spoke to a group of fellow students, attesting to the benefits which participation in the program would have for them as migrant workers. He reported that he had been given a better-paying job over others with more seniority, due to his new fluency in English. The farmworkers' union upheld this promotion on the grounds that the worker served a useful purpose as translator for the other workers.[171]

Learner Support Activities

Connected to the above governance, recruitment, and intake activities are a range of activities which can be categorized under the heading of "learner support activities." These activities aim at affective and social goals, including improved learner morale, self-esteem, group identity, and cooperative behavior. The activities also seek to achieve technical objectives, like improved communication among program participants, increased personal identification by learners with the program, and reduction in drop-out rates. These support activities include support groups, recognition events, and social activities. Learners take active roles in these activities in the following ways:

Support groups. These groups vary in how formally structured they are, but most share the basic objective of helping individual learners feel that they are "not alone" and that there are others with whom they can share feelings and concerns. In one example, the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association conducts ESL classes in the New York City apartments of its Southeast Asian students. The intimate, "homey" atmosphere has led to the creation of de-facto support groups, in which "through the sharing of everyday human experiences, feelings of trust and closeness between students and teachers evolve, and the desire to express them develops."[172]

Philadelphia's Center for Literacy reports that students started support groups to give themselves the "chance to open up":

> Students should have a group to help their fellow students. They need to share (their) experience. . . . A lot of students were scared at first, but now they feel more comfortable about talking with fellow students. . . . Students need someone else to talk to besides their teacher or family. . . .

> Students have a responsibility to get involved with the program . . . [173]

Recognition events. Most of these events are aimed at building student morale and often have the added objective of increasing public awareness about what adult literacy programs are achieving. Students' roles in these activities vary from fairly passive to more active ones. In the former, they might merely accept an award decided upon by program staff. In the latter, they might make prepared speeches, organize the event, hand out awards, or have a say in who receives the award. In a few cases, the recognition events aim at building the morale of tutors, and in those cases the students' roles often consist of selecting winners and otherwise organizing and running the event. Examples include:

New York's Mayor Koch has handed out awards at two "Adult Student Recognition Ceremonies" sponsored by the City University of New York in 1985 and 1986,[174] and Philadelphia's Mayor Goode has participated in similar student recognition ceremonies at his own city hall.[175]

North Carolina's Department of Community Colleges sponsors an annual continuing education achievement night at which outstanding students receive special awards. In one such event, a former convict and graduate of a Sandhills Community College GED program was the keynote speaker.[176] Pennsylvania's Association of Adult Continuing Education also sponsors an annual awards program for outstanding adult basic education students from around the state.[177] And, on a local level, the Watauga Regional Mental Health Center in Tennessee held a student awards luncheon in April 1986 for students in its adult basic education program.[178]

In a reverse on the normal student-recognition theme, students in the Brooklyn Public Library program held a "Students Salute the Tutors" event in January 1985. For the event, the students conducted a series of songs, readings, and skits aimed at thanking the tutors for their assistance.[179]

Social activities. These activities try to foster a positive group spirit among participants and have taken the following forms:

The Opportunity for Adult Reading Council in Bradley County, Tennessee hosted a May 1986 picnic for tutors and students in the program. The program featured "get-acquainted activities and a magic show (and) . . . student families brought desserts." According to the program coordinator: "So much of what we do is one-on-one that it seemed we should also plan a time to get acquainted with other people in the program and to introduce our families."[180]

The Student Council at the Brooklyn Public Library program hosted a students-vs.-tutors softball game in July

1985. The game was part of a larger "Family Day" program of games, a puppet show, and meals for program participants and their families.[181]

Philadelphia's Lutheran Settlement House holds "alumni reunions" for graduates of its Women's Program basic skills classes.[182]

Conferences

Learners are participating in a variety of literacy-related conferences, fulfilling a variety of active roles, which in turn are fulfilling a variety of purposes. These purposes include training of staff and students, support of other learners, public awareness, and others. Examples include:

At the national level, LLA and LVA have invited students to attend their national conferences since 1984. At the conferences, the students formed support groups which discussed issues of importance to group members. Learners in turn led workshops which often involved role-playing and which were aimed at fellow students and literacy practitioners and others in attendance. At those conferences, learners were also interviewed by the press.[183]

Similar student involvement has been a feature of many other conferences during that period, with students making presentations and otherwise taking leadership roles in the national conferences of the Association for Community Based

Education,[184] the 1985 conference of the Laubach Southwest Region,[185] the 1986 state conference of Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey,[186] two 1986 meetings of community-based literacy practitioners in Philadelphia and New York City,[187] and a January 1987 conference in New York City entitled "Students and Teachers as Partners in Learning" in which each workshop was co-led by at least one adult student and one staff person.[188]

Community development

Effecting change in the quality of life of communities is a stated goal of many literacy efforts, particularly those commonly termed "community based programs."[189] In many programs, learners are in fact participating in a variety of activities outside the program setting which aim at improving the surrounding community, as shown in the following examples:

Voting rights and procedures are a common theme of instructional and follow-up activities in many programs. The Houston County Schools ABE program in Tennessee, for example, urges its staff to help learners to, first, practice filling out voter registration forms and, then, to actually go to a registration site and officially register. Program administrators tell the staff that "encouragement and preparation in reading class may result in a more involved citizen and a more motivated reader."[190]

Washington Literacy similarly urges its tutors to

> consider group showing or "listening" of election audio or videotapes to help students gain access to candidate and election information. Or, groups can sponsor a "Meet the Candidates" event for students to meet and hear the people running for office.[191]

Southeast Asian students in the Church Ave. Merchants Association ESL program in Brooklyn attended a special showing of The Killing Fields, a film depicting repressive conditions in Cambodia. As a follow-up activity, the students participated in an international Human Rights Day at a local high school.[192]

After attending the 1984 national Laubach Conference, students in the Laurens County Literacy Council in South Carolina took on new, more active roles within and outside the program. For some, this included becoming more active in local community groups, including a new Assault on Illiteracy Program affiliate, which aimed in particular at generating literacy activity within the local black community.[193]

When her elderly tutor broke a hip and was incapacitated, a literacy student in the Blount County Schools program in Tennessee began to meet the tutor in her home. After their lessons, the student helped the tutor with cleaning and other chores.[194]

The Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, a Bronx-based program which combines job-training, life-skills training and counseling, and remedial education, began in the early 1970s as a youth leadership organization. That theme of leadership development has continued until now, and Banana Kelly students participate in special leadership training "weekends" in collaboration with students from other job-training programs around the city.[195]

Program staffing

Learners are in some cases taking on new roles as paid or volunteer staff within literacy programs. Most commonly they work as staff in the programs in which they have been participating as students, but in some cases they move on to work in other programs. Examples include:

When she completed her GED studies at the Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program in Philadelphia, a student moved on to work as an instructor in two other adult basic skills programs in the city. She also helped to coordinate an April 1986 conference of community based literacy practitioners and students in the mid-Atlantic region.[196]

The Program Director of Universidad Popular, an Hispanic basic skills program in Chicago, is herself a graduate of the Universidad's GED program. In a public statement on why she chose to work as an adult educator, she attributed her interest to her teacher's suggestion that "teaching others would make me a better learner."[197]

Denver's The Adult Learning Source has had two Hispanic graduates of the GED program serving as managers of two of the program's sites. One has served for eleven years, and the other for fifteen. These managers conduct initial testing of incoming students and match those students with appropriate curricular materials. They also follow up on absent students and otherwise handle much of the day-to-day management of the site. [198]

Four years after obtaining her GED at the Hispanic Women's Program at The Lighthouse in Philadelphia, a student has returned to work at the program as a child-care worker.[199]

Three ESL students at New York City's Riverside Church at one point received informal training to enable them to enter program research information into a computer system. This information was used in a study designed to help the program improve its operation, and the participating students were felt to be gaining useful job skills while earning at least a small salary. The students stated that they were pleased to do the job, whether they were paid or not, because they wanted to be able to give something back to the program.[200]

A 1984 graduate of another Philadelphia program subsequently studied at a community college and now teaches GED classes at the city's Sanctuary Bible Institute.[201]

Income generation

Learners are in this case working in short-term or ongoing projects which aim at generating funds, normally for the program itself but, in some cases, for the learners themselves. Examples include:

The directors of Bronx Educational Services[202] and other programs[203] on occasion bring students with them when they make presentations to funding sources. Students at Cleveland's Project: LEARN visited a suburban church to read scriptures, as part of an effort to solicit financial support from members of the congregation.[204] The Spartanburg AWARE program has been considering including some of its students' writings in fundraising packets to be sent to potential donors.[205] A student in the Reading Academy program at the Ford Motor Co. plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan volunteered to accompany the program director when she visited company administrators to submit a proposal for additional resources.[206]

Some Vietnamese ESL students raised funds for their program by selling egg rolls at a booth set up by their Literacy Volunteers affiliate. This was done during a Buffalo Grove Days community-wide celebration in Illinois.[207]

Students at Push Literacy Action Now in Washington, D.C. help to generate resources for the program in a variety of ways. For one, students themselves make a small weekly tuition payment of $5.00, a payment which reportedly conveys to the students a greater sense of responsibility and ownership for the program. Students have also run garage sales, raising $800 on one Saturday. Students serve on the program's fundraising committee, and students talk with their employers about making financial and in-kind[208] donations to the program. Students were also instrumental in developing the program's third-party payment system through which the student's employer pays $10 to $15 in tuition fees for the student, for two 24-week sessions; the student in turn pays ten percent of what the employer pays, a system which is seen as in keeping with the common concept of employer-paid tuition assistance.[209]

When the local sewing factory burned down and took with it jobs which had traditionally gone to one hundred local women, the Dungannon Development Commission basic skills program in rural Virginia formed a sewing cooperative. The co-op now employs more than thirty local residents, many of them participants in the basic skills program. Plans are underway to build a new factory, which will be owned by town residents. Program participants also raised funds to have an abandoned railroad station moved and refurbished for use as a community center where the program's activities are housed.[210]

When a car-buff student in a Maine program heard that the program was about to embark on a fundraising drive, he bought a case of motor oil and raffled it off, with the proceeds going to the program.[211]

Staff recruitment and training

Learners also assist in the recruitment and training of literacy program staff members, most of whom until now have been volunteers serving as tutors in individual programs. Examples include:

Staff recruitment. The thrust of many of the public-awareness broadcasts of the nationwide Coalition for Literacy and PLUS campaigns has aimed in particular at recruiting volunteer tutors, via such messages as "The only degree you need is a degree of caring." Learners from around the country were interviewed, portrayed by actors, or shown on screen in these recruitment messages.[212]

On a more-local level, students are called on to join staff members to make tutor-recruitment presentations to audiences of community groups, corporate employees, and other sources of volunteers.[213]

Staff training. As described above under "Conferences," students have led or co-led sessions at literacy conferences at many levels, with many of those sessions being done for the purpose of training practitioners in attendance.

In one fairly unique example of staff training, a Literacy Volunteers of Chicago student who had worked for many years as a skilled maintenance worker volunteered to train and supervize a new janitor who had been provided to the program under a workfare arrangement.[214]

SECTION III:
THE EXTENT OF USE OF PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES

Interviews with key informants from most of the literacy-field segments described above[215] and a review of reports related to those segments of the field[216] provide the following picture of how commonly the above categories of participatory activities are now being implemented in U.S. literacy programs:

Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs

ABE programs are often accused of being entrenched in outmoded instructional and management approaches which are carryovers from the formal-school systems in which most of them are housed. Most of the sources interviewed for this survey[217] confirmed that ABE programs within their states generally lagged behind other literacy programs in their interest in participatory practices. There were, however, exceptions to this apparent rule.

In Minnesota's ABE system,[218] for example, students have since the early 1980s been encouraged to participate actively in setting of personal goals for the time they are to be involved with the program. This process is very individualized, in keeping with the official learner-centered philosophy of the state ABE office. In this process, students are not only asked to identify what they want to accomplish in the program;[219] they are also asked to identify what they already know and things that they feel have been rewarding to them as learning tools or reading materials. This approach, however, has met with some resistance from funders and administrators who want more generalized standards by which they can judge program effectiveness. Some instructors likewise have called for a more standardized curriculum on the grounds that it would provide them with a clearer idea of what to do in the classroom each day. Some students, including immigrants who come to educational settings with traditional views of what education should be, also expect more prescribed curricula. The program has instituted special training activities for administrators, instructors, and students to help resolve these questions. This overall approach to adult basic education was instituted when a major program assessment in the late 1970s indicated that traditional approaches were simply not working.

Volunteer Programs

Laubach Literacy Action (LLA)

By its own admission,[220] LLA had until recently focused primarily on developing the tutor as a resource. This was reflected in the amount of energy which went into training, supplying, and supervising tutors. This focus began to change in approximately 1983-84, when students began talking to the media and thereby began to make their presence felt more strongly to LLA national headquarters. At that point, the national office realized that, despite the increased level of interest being shown by students, as a national organization LLA didn't know what additional roles students could take on.

During the same period, some LLA personnel became increasingly influenced by literacy program models developed in the Third World. Some of these models had been developed by Laubach's international wing, which tended to place greater emphasis on linking literacy training to local community needs via a group problem-solving process.[221] These personnel cite Paulo Freire as a particular theoretical influence.

A key event which served as a catalyst for subsequent participatory activities was LLA's 1984 biennial conference in Olympia, Washington. A number of students from LLA affiliates nationally were invited to several pre-conference planning meetings in which the topics and agenda for student sessions were discussed. About fifty LLA students were subsequently brought to the conference and encouraged to participate in various conference activities. These activities included all-student workshops and more general workshops which the students were encouraged to attend.

The Volunteer Reading Aides office of Lutheran Church Women was a principle organizer of this event, sinking a large part of its budget into air fares for the student participants. A subsequent Lutheran Church Women report[222] claimed that both students and non-students involved in the conference and related events had considerable interest in this kind of student involvement. The report made general and specific suggestions for how such involvement could be fostered within literacy programs. Such a partnership role is, the report concluded, very much in keeping with LLA's stated philosophy of "Each One Teach One." Students who participated in that conference returned to their programs to begin to spread the idea of expanded student roles among fellow students. This interest subsequently continued to express itself in the organizing of student involvement in LLA's 1986 biennial conference in Memphis. About sixty students attended this conference, this time without travel subsidies. Students not only ran a number of workshops at the conference, including one entitled "Tutors: Listen to Your Students"; they also tentatively decided to form some sort of national LLA student network, linked together by a newsletter, state representatives, and other mechanisms.

The national Laubach office responded to these expressed interests by instituting a national "student" newsletter. Although the editing, graphics, and much of the writing for the first issue were done by LLA staff, the second issue was written almost entirely by Laubach students.[223] LLA also sponsored an early 1987 meeting of four key representatives from the student group organized at the Memphis conference. In that meeting, the student representatives produced a set of prioritized recommendations[224] for consideration by the national LLA Steering Committee, summarized below:

> Goal 1: Establish student support groups at the local level.
>
> Goal 2: Keep students involved in literacy beyond their role as students in the tutoring sessions.
>
> Goal 3: Recognize new readers as "empowered" and significant participants in society.
>
> Goal 4: Be certain that students are not unnecessarily embarrassed or jeopardized (on their jobs, for example) by "going public" about their literacy problems.

Beyond this convening of a four-member national student advisory committee, LLA has been making plans for a "national student congress," to be held in Philadelphia in the fall of 1987, the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. Student representatives from all fifty states would be invited, to further discuss the kinds of issues developed by the national student committee. LLA's Northeast Region has also carried out a survey[225] of its affiliates in eight states, to determine how common learner participation is in several of the management areas identified in Section II above. The 56 programs which responded claimed that thirteen percent of them planned to send students to the June 1987 regional conference; thirteen percent have a student support group or council; thirty-four percent plan to start such a group; and thirty-two percent have students working in some capacity in the program.

A Laubach staff member[226] centrally involved in these developments acknowledged that it is difficult to assess the level of interest which practitioners and students have in these forms of learner participation. He however made the following rough estimate of the number of LLA programs involved in participatory activities as of early 1987:

10% of programs : serious about learner participation
20% of programs : implementing some form of learner participation
30% of programs : talking about learner participation
30% of programs : ignoring the learner participation issue

LLA's participatory activities to date focus more on the "management" side of program activities, especially in the areas of public awareness, governance, advocacy, and support groups. The LLA instructional approach still relies primarily on the one-to-one workbook format, one which allows little of the learner participation described earlier in this chapter.[227]

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)

Relative to LLA and many other segments of the literacy field, LVA has historically placed greater emphasis on the use of the language experience approach in its instructional component and, more recently, on the use of a small group instructional format. In those ways, LVA has been a bit more receptive to participatory practices in instruction, although de facto most programs still rely heavily on workbooks and other forms of programmed learning.

In the late 1970s, however, the organization became increasingly interested in involving learners in program management activities. One precipitating event was the developing, by a LV of Hartford student, of a "student coach" position. This arrangement provided for a student leader to give moral support to other learners within the affiliate and to pass feedback on to program staff regarding areas of concern to students. This model was subsequently promoted within the LVA system nationally, as a means of providing opportunities for learners to express their feelings about the program, which might include any dissatisfaction they might be having with their tutors. It was felt that this feedback system might also reduce dropout rates and other problems within the program.[228]

Various attempts were made at LVA national conferences in 1979, 1981, and 1982 to conduct workshops around the issue of "student involvement." In the 1981 and 1982 conferences, students made presentations about their active roles in their respective programs. The national Field Services office subsequently began to receive reports of learner participation in tutor training, intake procedures, dropout prevention efforts, and advisory groups.

In 1982, the LVA National Planning Retreat assigned the national Field Services Committee to "collect information on current/potential student involvement, analyze, and recommend a plan to the Board." A report resulted, entitled Student Involvement Guidelines,[229] which made concrete recommendations for programs considering involving learners in most of the management activities described above.[230]

This report also described the results of a 1982-83 "feasibility study"[231] of 57 LVA affiliates, which aimed at determining the level of learner participation in various program areas at that point. The study indicated that out of 57 questionnaires returned:

9 have had students serving as peer tutors.
16 have had students serving on Boards.

25 have had students in public awareness activities.

9 have had students serving as "advocates".

18 have had students helping with miscellaneous "other" activities (e.g., mailings, workshops, tag sale, potluck supper, phoning).

22 do not involve students in any particular "participatory" activity.

In 1986, LVA received a $10,000 grant from author Sidney Sheldon which was to be used for special student-related activities. LVA used $3000 of this amount to bring students to the 1986 national conference in Chicago, and $2000 was set aside to enable students to come to the 1987 national conference. National staff claim that only since about 1984 have students done more at such conferences than merely giving testimonials. At the 1986 conference, students prepared special presentations which were made to the general conference audience on the final day of the conference. In these presentations, students made particular demands that they, in effect, be recognized as legitimate adults who should be allowed to take positions of responsibility within their programs. The national staff present at that session publicly agreed to see how those student expectations could be met.[232]

At this same 1986 national conference, the remaining $5000 of the Sidney Sheldon grant, along with $2000 donated by Lutheran Church Women, was awarded by the LVA office to thirteen affiliates which had submitted proposals for special "student projects." These grants were designed "to encourage local programs to develop innovative projects that would enhance students' learning or involve students in their programs other than as learners."[233] Grants ranged from $300 to $750 in support of such activities as student councils, student newsletters, a student telephone committee, book clubs, student coaches, and a parent-child reading circle.

However, on a national level, these kinds of efforts appear still to be in the minority within the LVA system, judging from the results of the most recent national survey conducted by LVA on this topic. This 1985-86 survey indicated that, for the programs surveyed, the area of greatest learner participation was that of public awareness, with other forms of learner participation being only scarcely represented in programs nationally.[234]

Other volunteer organizations

Because there is no formalized network for the unknown number of other volunteer literacy programs which are not part of the LLA or LVA networks, there is no way at present of estimating the extent of use of learner participation practices within those organizations.

Community Based Organizations

While ostensibly all of the CBOs involved in literacy should almost by definition have extensive learner participation in program activities, it is in fact difficult to quantify how many CBOs actually use participatory practices. As a national umbrella organization for community based literacy organizations, the Association for Community Based Education counts two-thirds of its 62 current and former members as organizations having adult literacy instruction as a focus.

Interviews with representatives of those organizations and review of reports from those programs indicate that it is likely that all of those approximately 45 organizations currently have or did in the past have learner participation as a key feature.[235] Other participation-oriented CBOs which are not ACBE members include many of the members of the Alternative Schools Network[236] and Universidad Popular[237] in Chicago; The American Reading Council,[238] The Door,[239] and the Community Language Services at LaGuardia Community College[240] in New York; San Francisco's Project Literacy;[241] and others. These programs tend to share the "social change" perspective described in Chapter II and try to link basic skills instructions to personal and social issues affecting the learners and their communities.

There is at present a lack of a formalized communications network among CBOs, due in part to a lack of agreement within the literacy field about what the term "community based organization" means.[242] It is for this reason difficult to quantify the number of literacy CBOs which use participatory practices. Estimates of the number of literacy CBOs,[243] however, range from 3500 to 7000 organizations nationwide, and it appears likely that a majority of them place a special emphasis on learner participation practices.

In some cases, CBOs have become seen as models of learner participation but have ceased to operate altogether, due to such factors as lack of resources, staff "burn out," or a fading away of the social movement to which the program was connected. In some cases, model CBOs have lost the dynamic leadership which maintained the program's commitment to learner participation.[244] However, those CBOs which endure, and even some that don't, have tended to become seen by others as models of a participatory philosophy and often see one of their primary functions as spreading the word about the why's and how's of learner participation.[245] Even some of those "models" of learner participation are, however, on occasion criticized as not being fully participatory. This disagreement about what constitutes a participatory program indicates the need to more closely define the ingredients of a participatory approach.

Colleges and Universities

Due largely to the lack of systematic information about what goes on in college-based basic skills programs, there is no reliable way at present of estimating how many of those programs use participatory practices. However, some isolated examples are known to exist, many of which also fall into other categories of literacy providers. These isolated programs include the City University of New York program described by Shor,[246] the LaGuardia Community College program for Hispanics in Queens,[247] the Universidad Popular program in Chicago,[248] and Eastern Michigan University's Reading Academy.[249]

Employee Programs

As is true in many of the other segments of the literacy field, there is no systematic communications network at present among employee programs. Thus, it is difficult to develop a reliable estimate of the extent of participatory practices within employee programs nationally.

However, interviews with researchers and practitioners with a working knowledge of employee programs indicate that the majority of these programs use fairly traditional approaches to instruction. In fact, the majority of employee programs rely on instructors from local ABE programs which, as noted above, tend to rely heavily on programmed learning formats.

There are exceptions to this rule, however. One of the more participatory corporate programs is that run by the Ford Motor Company at its plant in Ypsilanti, in collaboration with the United Auto Workers.[250] The worker-students in this program identify themes of personal interest to themselves and develop their basic skills through writing and reading of texts related to those interests. The company-sponsored basic skills programs at Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Bank of New England, Bank of Boston, and other Boston-area companies work with the Continuing Education Institute, which builds writing activities around skills which learners have already developed in their lives.[251] In one of the more unusual applications of a self-described "Freirian" approach, employees in a now defunct basic skills program sponsored by Consolidated Edison[252] in New York City worked with instructors to identify personally-potent themes around which subsequent basic skills instructions were based.

Several member unions of the Consortium for Worker Literacy in New York City have developed participatory practices, in keeping with the Consortium's stated participatory philosophy. The Teamsters program, for example, has developed reading materials around themes identified by participating union members, and the

International Ladies Garment Workers Program has developed a system of student councils and a student-operated recruitment system.[253] Other labor organizations have likewise taken similar participatory approaches in their basic skills programs.

In the area of job-training programs, many of the above-described community-based organizations[254] in fact have job-skills-training as a major focus and might thus be included here as job training programs which use participatory literacy practices. One such example is the Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association,[255] a Bronx program which originally focused on teaching low-income youth how to weatherize buildings and which more recently has introduced a remedial education program to its curriculum. The curriculum takes a holistic approach, attempting to integrate job skills training, life skills training and counseling, and remedial basic skills instruction. Learners are also involved in public awareness and advocacy activites, development of a slide-tape presentation, and in leadership training programs run collaboratively with other job-training organizations in New York City. As in the case of employer-sponsored programs and union-sponsored programs, however, there is at present no reliable way of determining the extent of uses of learner participation practices within the growing number of job-training-related basic skills efforts.

Correctional Institutions

There is at present no reliable means of knowing in much detail what is going on in correctional literacy programs nationally. As with most of the other segments of the literacy field, most available information on participatory practices in correctional programs comes from a small number of programs which tend to operate in isolation from each other. These isolated examples include the San Quentin prison program, which emphasizes the use of language-experience writing activities;[256] the Sing Sing prison program in which inmate students and tutors and their "outside" supporters operated a 1986 "Run for Literacy" fundraising project, with students appearing in accompanying public-awareness news coverage;[257] and a Virginia inmate film club which put together a video documentary on prison literacy efforts which featured inmate students as film crew members and interviewees.[258]

Maryland's is one state correctional system which has several formalized mechanisms which reinforce the use of participatory practices of one type or another.[259] Its federally-funded special education programs and its Mutual Agreement Program Planning (MAPP) system both demand that education-program participants formally participate in identifying educational objectives and timelines. In practice, the quality and depth of learner participation in these processes varies according to the interest level of both students and staff, as well as according to the amount of time and other resources available.

Also in the Maryland system, a peer-tutoring approach has been in operation since the early 1980s. Learners plan and write language-experience stories around themes of interest to them. These inmates have also appeared in public awareness news coverage, planned recognition events, and helped with a variety of management, clerical, cleaning, and other logistical duties. At one point, selected students were occasionally allowed to attend literacy-related conferences outside the prison in the company of guards. This practice was discontinued, however, partially in response to fears raised by others in attendance at those events and partially in response to general public perceptions of inmate release programs as they affect public safety.

Practitioners sympathetic to the notion of learner participation practices in correctional settings[260] point out that development of such practices faces several significant obstacles. For one, inmate schedules tend to be erratic, characterized by transfers and demands from other social and correctional agencies which tend to hinder the development of the interest and experience required for these practices. Those who would like to develop alternative educational approaches within prisons are also often faced with entrenched, traditional educational practices which depend on outmoded, public school curricula. Perhaps of greatest significance is the hierarchical power structure within prisons which is resistant to the notion of giving prisoners too much power. The notions of "student councils," "students as public advocates," and other participatory practices challenge staff and learners to put proportionately more power within the program into the hands of learners, and might very well be seen by administrators as a threat to the prison power structure.

Minority Language Programs

National sources[261] indicate that there are various opinions vis-a-vis the prospects of developing participatory approaches for minority language programs. In particular, there appear to be several views on what it is that is currently blocking the use of participatory practices. According to one view, minority language programs generally don't use these practices because the programs tend to be short-term in nature, not allowing adequate time for the development of an awareness among learners of the potential of a participatory approach.

Another view holds that most minority language programs emphasize the assimilation of the participants into the new, North American culture. With that emphasis there is -- intentionally or not -- at least an implicit denial of the validity of the participants' culture and a lack of encouraging of participants to take an active, leadership role in shaping their new environment. The newcomers are helped to adapt to, and cope with, the new world, but not to challenge and master it. In such a context, learners would by extension not likely be encouraged to take on leadership roles within the program.

Some see a third obstacle in the traditional, hierarchical view of the student-teacher relationship which many newcomers bring with them from their home countries. This view is seen to discourage the notion that uneducated people have much right to taken a leadership role in an educational setting or, more broadly, in determining the course of their own lives.

For these or other reasons, the kinds of participatory practices discussed earlier have not to date been a common feature of most basic skills programs for immigrant populations. Exceptions exist, however, in the work of such practitioners as Nina Wallerstein and Elsa Roberts Auerbach[262] who have adapted a Freirian philosophy to small-group ESL instruction in various program settings. Some staff members of the Riverside Church ESL program likewise follow Charles Curran's notion of "counseling learning," in which language instruction activities are based on the existing interests and language skills which participants bring with them to the program, rather than on a prepackaged curriculum.[263] The LaGuardia Community College and Union Settlement House programs described in Chapter IV have adapted a Freirian philosophy to basic-skills instructions in both Spanish and English for Hispanic participants in New York City.[264]

One immigrant-program structure cited as at least potentially supportive of a participatory philosophy is that of the federal system of Mutual Assistance Associations.[265] Those Associations take the form of self-help programs run by members of a particular immigrant group on behalf of newly-arrived members of the same group. Many of these programs have ESL instruction being conducted by recent graduates of the same ESL programs. There is within this kind of community-oriented structure a greater potential for the forms of active learner participation being discussed here. However, despite these examples of participation-oriented programs, and despite the commonly-held perception that immigrant groups tend to be highly motivated and hopeful for what they can accomplish in this country, participation-oriented programs appear to be relatively rare in this segment of the adult basic skills field.

Libraries

Again, there is little information available about what goes on in individual library-based literacy programs nationally. However, some individual programs stand out as practitioners of participatory practices. These include the Brooklyn Public Library program,[266] the New York Public Library's Centers for Reading and Writing,[267] the Contra Costa County Library[268] and the Richmond Public Library[269] in California, and, at a state level, the California State Library's California Literacy Campaign.[270] In this last case, the California Library has made student involvement a central theme of its state conferences since 1985 and has had students serving public awareness and advocacy roles. This interest in learner participation was reinforced by a 1984 study[271] commissioned by the Library which recommended that the Library "encourage student involvement at all levels of the project, including decision-making levels."

Religious Organizations

Lutheran Church Women has been a particularly visible force in promoting learner participation practices. This interest in participation was supported by a 1982 study commissioned by LCW which found that, in the LCW programs which existed at that time, there was limited learner participation in student recruitment, tutor-training, tutoring, intake procedures, or evaluation of instructions. This was despite the fact that tutors and students felt that such forms of learner participation would be useful and positive. The report concluded that

> In essence, the student is asked only to come to tutoring sessions and to do as his/her tutor says -- nothing more, nothing less. If he/she comes, he/she is supposed to learn to read; yet, it is evident that many students do not. Given this state of affairs, it would only seem logical to solicit more active student participation in the learning process and the activities which lead up to and succeed it. It is becoming more rare each year to find private, non-profit educational or human service organizations with programs for adults which do not include consumers on their boards or at least solicit consumer feedback on program operations. Yet, few literacy organizations do either. Again, the "cloak of anonymity" is spread, this time to prevent students from impacting on the organization and program allegedly designed to help them. The dehumanization involved should be obvious.[272]

This report served as a guide for much of LCW's subsequent leadership around the issue of learner participation. LCW was not only promoted a participatory approach within existing literacy organizations like LLA and LVA; it has also promoted greater student involvement in the literacy efforts of other religious organizations.[273] To date, however, LCW appears to be the only national religious organization actively promoting a participatory approach, although some individual church-based programs have supported such activities within their own individual basic skills programs.[274]

Military Programs

Not enough data were available to provide the basis for a meaningful estimate of the extent of use of participatory practices in military programs. However, it is known that in at least one case in the military,[275] students participating in job-related literacy training were asked to not merely absorb prescribed technical information but to analyze and re-express it in a variety of forms. These forms included verbal and written descriptions, graphs, ables, and line-drawings. Practice with such varied forms of representation were based on job-site research which indicated that these were in fact the ways that workers used language on their jobs.

Services for the Disabled and Proprietary Programs

For these two segments of the literacy field, not enough data were available to allow a meaningful estimate of the extent of use of participatory practices.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The adult literacy field in the United States is a conglomeration of learners, practitioners, and supporters who interact in twelve major categories of program settings. Many of these programs overlap in terms of purposes, instructional approaches, and institutional contexts. These programs are as follows: government-funded Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, volunteer programs, community based organizations, colleges and universities, employee programs, correctional institutions, minority language programs, libraries, religious organizations, military programs, services for the disabled, and proprietary programs. Additional support organizations have been set up to provide planning and coordination, funding and in-kind assistance, research, training, and instructional materials to the twelve categories of literacy providers.

Within literacy programs, the learner participation approach has been implemented in more than thirty categories and sub-categories of instructional and management practices. These categories are outlined below:

I. Instructional practices:
   A. Planning and evaluation of instruction
   B. Implementation of instruction
      1. Learners as teachers
      2. Learners as writers
         -- Newsletters
         -- Letter-writing
         -- Writers' workshops
         -- Writing awards

    -- Use of word processors
    -- Writing of functional texts
  3. Participatory reading activities
  4. Field trips
  5. Learners as artists
    -- Drawing
    -- Role-playing
    -- Photo and video presentations

II. Management practices:

- A. Public awareness and advocacy
  - 1. Public awareness
    - -- News coverage
    - -- Public speaking
  - 2. Advocacy
- B. Program governance
  - 1. Boards of directors
  - 2. Student advisory councils
- C. Learner recruitment and intake
- D. Learner support activities
  - 1. Support groups
  - 2. Recognition events
  - 3. Social activities
- E. Conferences
- F. Community development
- G. Program staffing
- H. Income generation

I. Staff recruitment and training

There is at present a lack of reliable data available from programs upon which to make anything near an exact estimate of the extent of use of the above learner participation practices across the range of program types described above. However, a suggestive survey of representatives of those various types of programs indicates that (1) as a group, community based organizations have had the longest and most active use of these practices, and (2) the national volunteer literacy organizations -- with particular leadership from Lutheran Church Women -- have more recently been doing much to promote the use of participatory practices among their members, although this interest is still in relatively beginning stages. Otherwise, it can only safely be said that there are isolated programs in virtually every segment of the field who take a participatory approach. However, due to the limited amount of research in the literacy field as a whole and in the area of the participatory approach in particular, the number of those programs cannot be determined nor can the quality and outcomes of existing practices be assessed.

Recent public awareness coverage using students in visible roles, the work of the national volunteer groups in conjunction with Lutheran Church Women, and major MacArthur Foundation funding to CBOs via the Association for Community

Based Education are three significant forces likely to produce greater interest in the notion of learner participation.

ENDNOTES

1. Due to the length and complexity of this chapter, it is formatted in a way which differs slightly from the more-standard formats used in the other chapters. The primary difference is the use of capitalized headings for each of the three sections.

1. Paul Irwin, *Adult Literacy Issues, Programs, and Options* (Washington, D.C.: Education and Public Welfare Division, Congressional Research Service, 4 August 1986), p. crs-3.

3. University of Texas at Austin, *Adult Performance Competency: A Summary*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas at Austin, 1975).

4. I.e., U.S. residents aged 16 and older, not enrolled in school.

5. David Harman and Carman St. John Hunter, *Adult Illiteracy in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), pp. 109-114.

6. Stephen Reder, *Giving Literacy Away: Alternative Strategies for Increasing Adult Literacy Development* (Andover, Massachusetts: The Network, 1985).

7. David Harman, *Turning Illiteracy Around: An Agenda for National Action*, Working Paper Number 2 (New York: Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1985) p. 14.

8. Dianne Kangisser, *Pioneers and New Frontiers* (New York: Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1985).

9. Association for Community Based Education, "A Project to Strengthen Community Based Adult Literacy Programs," (funding proposal, Washington, D.C.: Association for Community Based Education, n.d.), pp. 2-3.

10. See Association for Community Based Education, *Adult Literacy: A Study of Community Based Literacy Programs* (Washington, D.C.: Association for Community Based Education, 1983.)

11. Harman, ibid., p. 18.

12. George Baker, John Rouche, and Suanne Rouche, *College Responses to Low-Achieving Students* (Orlando, Florida: HBJ Media Systems Corporation, 1984).

13. Alaska, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, Wyoming, New Mexico, California, Florida, and Texas. (See "Colleges and Literacy," *BCEL Newsletter* (April 1987): 3.)

14. Dan Lacy, "Adult Literacy: A Prime Requirement for a High-Flex Society," paper presented at the North Carolina Conference for Social Service, 23 October 1986, Meredith College, Raleigh NC.

15. Presentation by Stanley Aronowitz about labor union remedial education programs, at "Critical Pedagogy" conference, Amherst MA, March 1986.

16. Dorothy Shields, interview conducted 18 June 1987.

17. Files of Business Council for Effective Literacy.

18. "Behind Bars," BCEL Newsletter 1 (October 1986): 4.

19. National Institute of Corrections, Making Literacy Programs Work: A Practical Guide for Correctional Educators (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections, 1987), quoted in "Behind Bars", ibid., p. 4.

20. "Behind Bars", ibid., p. 5.

21. Irwin, ibid., p. crs-7.

22. Jacqueline Cook and Anisia B. Quinones, Spanish Literacy Investigation Project (New York, New York: Solidaridad Humana, 1983).

23. The Office of Refugee Resettlement program has 19,500 participants.

24. The State Department programs have 36,000 participants.

25. "Literacy in a New Language," BCEL Newsletter 1 (January 1987): 1.

26. "Libraries and Literacy," BCEL Newsletter 1 (January 1986): 1.

27. Harman, ibid., pp. 17-18.

28. LLA founder Frank Laubach was a Protestant missionary, and to this day church congregations nationally provide volunteers, meeting sites, and financial contributions to LLA efforts.

29. Martha Lane, interview conducted 7 July 1986.

30. "The Main Basic Skills Programs: An Introduction," BCEL Newsletter 1 (September 1984): 8-9.

31. Women's American ORT District IX, "ORT Literacy Project" (Houston, Texas: Women's American ORT District IX, 10 February 1986).

32. R. Weinert, Literacy Training in the Army (Ft. Monroe, Virginia: TRADOC Historical Office, 1979).

33. Fred M. Hechinger, "Concern Over Schooling of Military Recruits," New York Times, 8 July 1986, p. C8.

34. Thomas M. Duffy, "Literacy Instruction in the Military," Armed Forces and Society 11 (Spring 1985): 437-67.

35. These "tutors" guide personnel through explanations of job-specific technical terms and, in the process, help the user to master the functional literacy related to those terms.

36. International Center for the Disabled, The ICD Survey of Disabled Americans: Bringing Disabled Americans into the Mainstream (New York: International Center for the Disabled, n.d.), p. iii.

37. Ibid., p. 2.

38. Division of Adult Education, "Adult Education Programs for Disabled Adults: Fact Sheet Number 9" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

39. Miscellaneous presentations made at the National Conference on Networking for Improved Literacy Services for Out-of-School Youth and Adults with Disabilities, Washington, D.C., 13-15 June 1984.

40. William Langner, interview conducted 15 April 1987.

41. "Proprietary Sector as a Delivery System," presentation at November 1985 Annual Conference of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

42. The National Urban Literacy Network, "Summary of Results of October 1986 Survey on Urban Literacy Activities in the United States," (New York: The National Conference on Urban Literacy, Literacy Assistance Center, January 1987).

43. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, Adult Literacy: A Policy Statement and Resource Guide (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Conference of Mayors, June 1986).

44. "Why You Should Worry If Your City Can't Read," presentation at Annual Conference of National League of Cities, San Antonio, Texas, December 1986.

45. Education Commission of the States, *Adult Literacy Fact Sheet* (Denver, Colorado: Education Commission of the States, 1986).

46. Meeting of National Governors' Association Task Force on Adult Literacy, Washington, D.C., 9 March 1987.

47. Meeting of State Literacy Initiatives, Washington, D.C., 18-19 August 1986.

48. Coalition for Literacy, "Fight Illiteracy: Join the Coalition for Literacy" (Chicago, Illinois: Coalition for Literacy, 1985).

49. Project Literacy U.S., "PLUS Task Force Update" (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Project Literacy U.S., 7 July 1986).

50. Information from files of Business Council for Effective Literacy.

51. Gordon Darkenwald, *Adult Literacy Education: A Review of the Research and Priorities for Future Inquiry* (New York: Literacy Assistance Center, Inc., 1986).

52. Harman, ibid.

53. University of Texas at Austin, ibid.

54. Renee Lerche, *Effective Adult Literacy Programs: A Practitioner's Guide* (New York: Cambridge Book Company, 1985).

55. Arlene Fingeret, *Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions* (Columbus, Ohio: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1984); Paul Ilsley, *Adult Literacy Volunteers: Issues and Ideas* (Columbus, Ohio: ERCI Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1985); Larry Mikulecky and Thomas Sticht, *Job Related Basic Skills: Cases and Conclusions* (Columbus, Ohio: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1984); Reder, ibid.

56. Ann Jungeblut and Irwin S. Kirsch, *Literacy: Profiles of Young Adults* (Princeton, New Jersey: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1986); Carl F. Kaestle, Andrew M. Sum, and Richard L. Venezky, *The Subtle Danger: Reflections on the Literacy Abilities of America's Young Adults* (Princeton: New Jersey: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1987).

57. Examples include: Governor and Superintendent's Joint Task Force on Adult Illiteracy, *Unlocking the Future: Adult Literacy in Arizona* (Phoenix, Arizona: Governor and Superintendent's Joint Task Force on Adult Illiteracy, December 1986); Governor's Task Force on Adult Literacy in Minnesota, *Report* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Governor's Task Force on Adult Literacy in Minnesota,

December 1984); Greater Cleveland Communications Skills Group, A Commitment to Literacy (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga Community College, 1985).

58. Many practitioners have had little or no formal training in literacy work.

59. "Colleges and Literacy", BCEL Newsletter, ibid., p. 5.

60. Laubach and LVA provide an average of 12-18 hours of pre-service training to their volunteer tutors and 4-6 hours of in-service training to each volunteer each year. McCallip interview, ibid.

61. At the November 1984 annual conference of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, David Harman raised the question of whether the American public would be content entrusting the education of their children to volunteers. If not, he implied, why should we entrust so much of our adult basic education to volunteers?

62. Commercial publishers include Cambridge Book Company; Contemporary Books, Inc.; Media Materials; Scott, Foresman, and Company; Steck-Vaughn; and others.

63. Non-commercial publishers include Laubach Literacy Action's New Readers Press, the materials produced by Literacy Volunteers of America, and other materials produced primarily by individual literacy programs around the country.

64. "The Case for Computers," BCEL Newsletter 1 (July 1985): 4-5; Technology for Literacy Center, Conference on Adult Literacy and Computers (St.Paul, Minnesota: Technology for Literacy Center, 1985).

65. Gail Spangenberg, "The Broadcast Media & Literacy," BCEL Newsletter 1 (July 1986): 1.

66. Harman, ibid., pp. 21-2.

67. See the Chapter II discussion of the "Social Change" perspective on instruction.

68. Pat Tirone, interview conducted 22 July 1986; also see Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages (Apple River, Illinois: Apple River Press, 1976).

69. David Penberg, interview conducted 25 August 1986; International Center for Integrative Studies, untitled document which describes the philosophy and workings of the EdTech Project (New York: The Door, International Center for Integrative Studies, n.d.).

70. Lloyd David, interview conducted 26 January 1987.

71. Michael Fox, interview conducted 30 January 1987.

72. Ira Shor, interview conducted 30 January 1987; also see Ira Shor, Critical Thinking and Everyday Life (Boston: South End Press, 1980).

73. V.K. Lawson, Read All About It: Tutor Adults with Daily Newspaper (Syracuse, New York: Literacy Volunteers of America, 1984).

74. Gabriele Stroehschen, interview conducted 7 January 1987.

75. "Tutor Talk," Passing the Word 2 (February 1986): 2.

76. Jon Deveaux, interviews conducted 5 February 1987 and 11 March 1987.

77. Sharon Darling, interview conducted 9 January 1987.

78. Rena Soifer, interview conducted 23 January 1987.

79. Penberg interview, ibid.

80. Carole Talan, interview conducted 19 December 1986.

81. Fox interview, ibid.

82. Penberg and Darling interviews, ibid.

83. Talan interview, ibid.

84. Deveaux interview, ibid.

85. Jane McGovern, interview conducted 27 March 1987.

86. Read On ... (August 1985): 2.

87. Deveaux interview, ibid.

88. William Bliss, interview conducted 3 February 1987.

89. Fox, 1986, ibid., pp. 21-22.

90. "New Approach Use to Teach Illiterate Adults," New York Times, 12 December 1984, p.A19.

91. Stroehschen interview, ibid.

92. Tirone interview, ibid.

93. Michael James, interview conducted 30 December 1986.

94. "From a Student's Point of View," The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News 1 (February 1986).

95. "A Student's Point of View," Literacy News (September-October 1986).

96. "Guest Editorial," Read On... (April 1986): 7.

97. Green Mountain Eagle (January 1980).

98. EdTech Voice, (May/June 1986 and November/December 1985).

99. The Bronx Ed. Monthly Planet, (1 April 1987).

100. "Announcing: A Student Pen Pal Program," CFL Letter 9 (April 1986): 9.

101. Green Mountain Eagle (January 1980): 4.

102. "First Student Letter Tells of Gaining Self-Respect through Laubach Literacy Training," Literacy Advance 10 (Fall 1985): 1.

103. Light on Literacy xiii (March/April 1986): 4.

104. "Writing Workshop Works," 382-3700 8 (September 1985): 5.

105. Karen Griswold, interview conducted 5 January 1987.

106. Read On... 1 (August 1985): 2.

107. Read On... (April 1986): 8.

108. Penberg interview, ibid.; International Center for Integrative Studies, ibid.

109. Penberg interview, ibid.

110. International Center for Integrative Studies, ibid. p. 4.

111. Klaudia Rivera, interview conducted 31 July 1986.

112. Time to Read (Spring 1986): 3.

113. Nancy Oakley, interview conducted 27 December 1986.; also: Marcia Pollack Fineman, Leaders' Packet for Adult New Readers' Book Clubs (Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Public Library and Project LEARN, n.d.)

114. "Northwest News," 382-3700 8 (December 1985): p. 6.

115. Read On... 8 (April 1986): p. 1.

116. Read On... 1 (August 1985): p. 6.

117. Time to Read (Spring 1986): pp. 2-3.

118. Griswold interview, ibid.

119. As observed by author at annual conference of Laubach Literacy Action, Memphis TN, June 1986.

120. Stroeschen interview, ibid.; Ralph Arrindale, interview conducted 11 November 1986.

121. Jon Deveaux, interview conducted 11 March 1987.

122. See American Reading Council case study in Chapter IV.

123. See Lutheran Settlement House case study in Chapter IV.

124. Anne Meisenzahl, interview conducted 9 July 1987.

125. See Appendix B.

126. PBS, "A Chance to Learn," September 1986.

127. ABC, "Nightline," 10 April 1986.

128. NPR, "Perspectives on the Literacy Crisis in America: What Went Wrong?," aired intermittently during 1986.

129. "Volunteers Key to Laubach Literacy Success, Waite Tells Southwest Regional Conference," Literacy Advance 10 (No. 1): 3.

130. "A Former Illiterate 'Comes Out'," Contra Costa (CA) Times, 26 April 1986, p. 4A; "Channel Five to Produce Local Documentary," Light on Literacy (September 1986): 2; "Trailblazers Boost Literacy with Program on Radio Station KGW," The Note 18 (Spring 1986),: 1.

131. Two students from Philadelphia's Center for Literacy appeared at the press conference launching the national public awareneness campaign sponsored by the Coalition for Literacy, held in New York City on 12 December 1984. See 382-3700 7 (Winter 1984): 3.

132. A student of the Colorado Springs Neighborhood Reading Project appeared at a press conference (held 24 February 1986) intended to kick off the Project's fundraising drive. See "Colorado Springs Press Conference," Colorado Literacy Action Update (March 1986): 1.

133. Examples include "The Sad Truth About Betty," Family Circle (1 October 1986): 48; "I Can't Read," Glamour (October 1985); and "Read All About It: How a Former Illiterate Overcame Her Fear and Learned to Love the Written Word," People (13 October 1986).

134. Examples include: "Written Words Lose Their Mystery," Detroit Free Press, 30 September 1985, p. 1E; "Plant Employees Work a 2nd Job in Classroom," Sandusky (OH) Register, 2 March 1986; "A Former Illiterate 'Comes Out'," Contra Costa (CA) Times, 26 April 1986, p. 4A.

135. M. Fox interview, ibid.

136. The Ladder, the newsletter of Push Literacy Action Now in Washington, D.C., has a regular feature entitled "What If You Couldn't Read?," which profiles a student from the program.

137. "Ability to Read 'Is Worth $1 Million'," Horizons 10 (Fall 1984): 1; "Call Him Mr. Glenn," More... II (September 1984); 14.

138. "'I Couldn't Read at All:' Student," Passing the Word (July 1985): 3.

139. "Projects at Work: NIF-LLA Pilot, 'Just What We're Looking For'," Literacy Advance 10 (No. 4): 3.

140. Rudy Fox, interview conducted in June 1986.

141. Meisenzahl interview, ibid.

142. "LVC Annual Meeting Tops Off the Year," Update (September 1986): 1.

143. "Dallas Man Goes Public with Story to Aid National Push for Literacy Project," Tablet II (September 1986): 5.

144. "Hispanic Literacy Council Formed in Chicago," Passing the Word 2 (July/August 1986): 2; Tom Heaney, interview conducted 13 March 1987.

145. "The Year in Review," Literacy News (February 1985): 1.

146. Sharon Darling, interview conducted 9 January 1987.

147. Al Bennett, interview conducted 14 January 1987.

148. Congressman Jim Cooper's Legislative Task Force on Literacy, Tennessee Literacy 2000: An Agenda for Action (Washington, DC: Congressman Jim Cooper's Legislative Task Force on Literacy, January 1987), p. 61.

149. Tirone interview, ibid.

150. Deveaux interview, ibid.

151. Meisenzahl interview, ibid.

152. George Hagenauer, interview conducted 15 January 1987.

153. *Colorado Literacy Action Update* (March 1986): 3; Talan interview, ibid.; Darling interview, ibid.

154. "Lesson Plan for Student Council Meeting," internal document of Brooklyn Public Library.

155. Oakley interview, ibid.

156. *The Reader* (August 1985): 2.

157. Deveaux interview, ibid.

158. Stroehschen interview, ibid.

159. M. Fox interview, ibid.

160. "FLC People," *Florida Literacy Coalition Bulletin* (March 1986): 2.

161. Talan interview, ibid.

162. *AWARENESS* (March 1986); Beverly Campbell, interview conducted 10 December 1986.

163. M. Fox interview, ibid.

164. "Lesson Plan for Student Council Meeting," internal document of Brooklyn Public Library.

165. "Chicago Program Gets Record Registration," *Passing the Word* 1 (October 1986): 2.

166. "Word-of-Mouth Is Best Advertising," *GED on TV* 6 (1986): 4.

167. "Illiterates Anonymous," article in newsletter of California Literacy, Inc., date unknown.

168. "Students Organize in Bradley County," *The Opened World: Volunteer Litercy News* 1 (March 1986): 2.

169. "Orientation," *AWARENESS* 7 (September 1986): 2.

170. Internal document of Brooklyn Public Library.

171. *Texas Literacy Update* 1 (January 1987): 2.

172. *Information Update* 1 (March 1985): 1.

173. *Center for Literacy Newsletter* 8 (December 1985): 3.

174. Author's observation of ceremonies at City University of New York.

175. *Read On...* (August 1985): 1.

176. "Call Him Mr. Glenn," *More...* II (September 1984): 14.

177. "Vanessa Fleet Named One of PA's Ten Outstanding Adult Basic Education Students," *The CFL Letter* 9 (April 1986): 2.

178. "ABE Students Honored in Elizabethton," *TABLET* (May 1986): 4.

179. Internal document of Brooklyn Public Library program.

180. "Bradley County Sponsors Picnic," *The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News* (May 1986): 3.

181. Internal document of Brooklyn Public Library.

182. "Congratulations!" *Read On...* 1 (August 1985), 2.

183. Jonathan McKallip, interview conducted 1 July 1986; Peter Waite, interview conducted 23 January 1987.

184. As observed by author at the ACBE annual conferences in 1984 and 1985 (in Washington, D.C.) and in Chicago (in 1986).

185. "Involving Adult Learners in Literacy Action," *Literacy Advance* (Fall 1985): 3.

186. Announcement of "8th Annual Read-on-Rally," of Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey, 19 April 1986, Atlantic Community College, Mays Landing NJ.

187. Members of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Association for Community Based Education sponsored two conferences for community based literacy practitioners and students, held in Philadelphia (April 1986) and New York (1 August 1986).

188. Conference announcement for "Students and Teachers as Partners in Learning: A City-Wide Adult Literacy Conference," held 7 February 1987 at Lehman College in Bronx, New York.

189. See the Chapter II discussions of the "social change" perspectives on instruction and management.

190. "Election Materials Used for Reading Lessons," The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News (March 1986): 6.

191. "A Student's Right to Vote," Literacy News (September/October 1986): 2.

192. "CAMBA Serves the Homebound," Information Update 1 (March 1985): 1-2.

193. Jo an Boehm, interview conducted 22 March 1985.

194. "Tutor and Student Help Each Other," The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News (March 1986): 3.

195. Meisenzahl interview, ibid.

196. Jane McGovern, interview conducted 27 March 1987.

197. "Hispanic Literacy Council Formed in Chicago," Passing the Word (June 1986): 2.

198. Sister Cecilia Linenbrink, interview conducted 22 May 1987.

199. Read On... 1, (August 1985): 4.

200. Tirone interview, ibid.

201. "Congratulations!" Read On... 1 (August 1985): 2.

202. Deveaux interview, ibid.

203. M. Fox interview, ibid.; See case study for Literacy Volunteers of New York City in Chapter IV.

204. Oakley interview, ibid.

205. Campbell interview, ibid.

206. Soifer interview, ibid.

207. Stroehschen interview, ibid.

208. One employer donated writing paper to the program.

209. M. Fox interview, ibid.

210. "CBO's: Reaching the Hardest to Reach," BCEL Newsletter 1 (April 1986): 1,4,5.

211. McKallip interview, ibid.

212. Spangenberg, ibid., p. 1.

213. Campbell interview, ibid.; See case study for Literacy Volunteers of New York City in Chapter IV.

214. George Hagenauer, interview conducted 15 January 1987.

215. See Appendix D.

216. See Appendix C.

217. Especially interviews with Darling (ibid.), Beret Harmon (conducted 23 February 1987), and Jacqueline Cook (conducted 20 February 1987).

218. Peter Pearson, interview conducted 16 March 1987; Brian Kanes, interview conducted 9 July 1987.

219. A learning contract is developed in these early stages in which students formally identify their goals and work plans.

220. Waite interview, ibid.

221. Lynn Curtis and Philip Rose, interviews conducted 30 May 1986 and 19 February 1987, respectively; Waite interview, ibid.

222. Martha A. Lane, Listening to Students (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Lutheran Church Women, 1985), pp. 40-43.

223. Students Speaking Out 1 (October 1986) and 2 (March 1987).

224. Rose interview, ibid.; Internal LLA document describing goals and issues identified in 31 January 1987 meeting of the National Student Committee, LLA Steering Committee.

225. Findings of the Literacy Council Survey conducted on behalf of literacy student activity, for presentation at the Laubach Literacy Northeast Regional Conference, June 1987.

226. Rose interview, ibid.

227. See "Participatory Practices Within the Instructional Component" in Section II of this chapter.

228. McKallip interview, ibid.

229. Literacy Volunteers of America, Student Involvement Guidelines (Syracuse, New York: Literacy Volunteers of America, 1982).

230. See "Participatory Practices Within the Management Component."

231. See Appendix A of Literacy Volunteers of America, Student Involvement Guidelines, ibid.

232. Stroeschen and Arrindale interviews, ibid.

233. "Student Project Grants Awarded," The Reader 8 (May 1986): 3.

234. LVA's Vice President for Field Services admits that, to date, there have been gaps in information about the extent and forms of learner participation within the LVA system. These gaps have been caused in part by different data-collecting instruments being used in the various surveys conducted so far (and, hence, different types of data being gathered in each survey). Also, more-experienced groups tended to have higher levels of learner participation; thus, the 1985-86 survey (which had a larger number of new groups than did the 1982-83 survey) understandably showed lower levels of learner participation among those newer groups. Another source of difficulty in assessing the levels of learner participation is the lack of a commonly understood "language" which would enable clearer communication among the various parties interested in the learner participation idea.

235. These organizations include Bronx Educational Services, Push Literacy Action Now, LaSalle University's Urban Studies Program, Solidaridad Humana, Lutheran Settlement House, the National Congress of Neighborhood Women, Dungannon Development Commission, Banana Kelly, Highbridge Community Life Center, Union Settlement House, Mt.Women's Exchange, the Barrio Education Project, the Highlander Center and others.

236. Hagenauer interview, ibid.; Heaney interview, ibid.

237. Javier Saracho, personal discussions, 1985-86; Thomas W.Heaney, Struggling to Be Free: The Story of Universidad Popular (Chicago, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 1984).

238. See case study for American Reading Council in Chapter IV.

239. Penberg interview, ibid.

240. K. Rivera interview, ibid.

241. James interview, ibid.

242. Azi Ellowitch, "Mid-Atlantic Regional Literacy Minigrant: Final Report." Report submitted to Association for Community Based Education upon completion in 1986 of networking project among community-based literacy programs in ACBE's mid-Atlantic region.

243. Harman, ibid., p. 17; "CBO's: Reaching the Hardest to Reach," BCEL Newsletter 1 (April 1986): 4.

244. Pancho Rivera, interview conducted 22 July 1986; Klaudia Rivera interview, ibid.; Hagenauer interview, ibid.

245. Bronx Educational Services is now training other programs in the use of its program model, as a result of the program's being selected as an outstanding program by the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network. The American Reading Council considers its Mothers Program (See Chapter IV case study.) as a "demonstration project," which is to serve as a model for dissemination to others. Lutheran Settlement House and LaSalle University's Urban Studies Program develop curriculum guides which they disseminate as models to other programs nationally. Through its nationally distributed newsletter, media interviews, and conference presentations, Push Literacy Action Now takes a visible role as advocate of a community based perspective. The Door has received a foundation grant which will enable it to train other programs in the computer-assisted instruction approach which it developed as a learner-centered alternative to standard computer-assisted instructional programs.

246. Shor interview, ibid.; Shor, ibid.

247. See case study for LaGuardia Community College in Chapter IV.

248. Saracho interview, ibid.; Heaney, ibid.

249. Soifer interview, ibid.

250. Ibid.

251. David interview, ibid.

252. "Radical Approach to Literacy," New York Times, 1 May 1977; Outline of steps used to implement a Freirian method at Consolidated Edison, furnished by the personnel office of Consolidated Edison; Presentation by former program staff member, Benita Somerfield, at 1985 ACBE conference in Washington, D.C.

253. Francine Boren, interview conducted 26 February 1987.

254. Examples include the Dungannon Development Commission, the Highbridge Community Life Center, Lutheran Settlement House, and The Door. See Azi Ellowitch, What's on Your Mind? Reading and Language Activities for Adult Basic Education Emphasizing Themes from the World of Work (Philadelphia, PA: LaSalle Urban Studies Center, June 1983).

255. Meisenzahl interview, ibid.

256. Steurer interview, ibid.

257. New York Times, 31 August 1986, xxii, 1:5.

258. Steurer interview, ibid.

259. Ibid.

260. Lynne Ornstein, interview conducted 11 August 1986; Steurer interview, ibid.

261. Bliss interview, ibid.; Nina Wallerstein, interview conducted 25 February 1987.

262. Nina Wallerstein, "Literacy and Minority Language Groups: Community Literacy as Method and Goal," presented at National Adult Literacy Conference, Washington, D.C., January 1984; Elsa Roberts Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein, ESL for Action (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1987).

263. Tirone interview, ibid.; Curran, ibid.

264. Also see Barrio Education Project, Education, Critical Awareness, Participation (San Antonio: TX: Barrio Education Project, n.d.)

265. Bliss interview, ibid.

266. Miscellaneous internal papers and handouts, Brooklyn Public Library.

267. Griswold interview, ibid.

268. Talan interview, ibid.

269. Wallerstein interview, ibid.

270. Bennett interview, ibid.; Rudy Fox interview, ibid.

271. Martha Lane, Jean Flatley McGuire, Christin H. Yeannikis, and Mark F. Wurzbacher, California Literacy Campaign Program Effectiveness Review (Sacramento, California: California State Library, 25 October 1984), pp. 24-6.

272. Mark F.Wurzbacher and Christine H. Yeannakis, Lutheran Church Women's Volunteer Reading Aides Evaluation Project: A Study of Volunteer Adult Basic Literacy Organizations in the United States and Canada with Recommendations for the Provision of Technical Assistance (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Lutheran Church Women, 20 September 1982), pp. 112-113.

273. For example, Lutheran Church Women is centrally involved in the planning of a literacy-related conference to be held in Fall 1987 by the National Council of Churches.

274. For example, the Highbridge Community Life Center in the Bronx is a community based program run by Catholic nuns; the Riverside Church ESL program is hosted by that Protestant church; The American Reading Council's Mothers Program was in its first year based in a Catholic church building in East Harlem; Lutheran Settlement House operates under the umbrella of Philadelphia's Lutheran Diocese; and Cleveland's Project: LEARN is sponsored by the Interchurch Council of Greater Cleveland.

275. Thomas G. Sticht, Functional Context Education Workshop Resource Notebook (San Diego, CA: The Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Science, March 1987), pp. 3.8 - 3.12.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDIES OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

The following case studies describe learner participation practices as they have been carried out in six literacy programs in New York City and Philadelphia. These six programs represent a range of program types: two volunteer programs, two minority language programs, and two community based programs for low-income women. The cases were so selected in order to demonstrate how participatory practices relate to other factors within a variety of program settings.

The cases are based on information gathered from program staff and participants in 1986. As such, the studies reflect primarily what went on during that period as conveyed by the informants interviewed. In some cases, the programs have already changed in significant ways, with changes in staff members and sites. For more information on how the cases were prepared and the sources for the information, the reader is asked to refer to the "Research Methods" section of Chapter I and to Appendices D and E.

Literacy Volunteers of New York City

General Description of Program

Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LV-NYC) was founded in 1973 as a private, non-profit affiliate of the Literacy Volunteers of America. Currently,[1] more than 500 adult learners participate in one-to-one and group literacy instructions, conducted by almost 300 tutors and supervized by a small professional staff. These tutorials take place in a variety of settings around the city, including churches and corporate meeting sites.

In addition to providing instruction in basic reading and writing skills up to the fifth grade level, LV-NYC operates basic math instructions, and a driver's license study group. Funding for the program comes from a variety of public and private sector funding sources, the latter including nearly thirty corporations.

Overview of Participatory Practices

LV-NYC is relatively unique among LVA affiliates in several important program features. For one, LV-NYC has a relatively large number of paid professional staff members who supervize tutors and learners in various sites around the city. Another unique feature is the small-group instructional format, entitled "The Intensive Program," a reading/writing workshop format which LV-NYC has instituted in two of its program sites. (LV-NYC still uses the more traditional one-to-one tutorial format, as well, and also has instituted other, non-"Intensive" small-group work.) A third outstanding feature is the student councils and related participatory activities which have been increasingly emphasized since 1985. This case study will look at the latter two features, the Intensive Program and the student councils, as examples of learner-participation practices.

Instructional Practices

The Intensive Program was introduced in October 1984, in part because LV-NYC recognized the need to provide learners with more "time on task" than was being given in conventional tutorials. The program was in part an outgrowth of training in the writing process which staff had received from Lucy Calkins at Columbia University's Teachers College. The program was also guided by a consultant who later joined the staff and who had a special interest in the whole language approach to reading and writing instruction.[2] The program was begun with the hope that the small group format would help to overcome the isolation which learners felt vis-a-vis each other, while enabling them to rely on each other for instructional and moral support. As one of the program's designers termed it: "Students can reach other students in ways which we can't."

Newly-arrived LV-NYC learners select whether they want to enter the traditional one-to-one tutorials, small tutorial groups, or the Intensive Program. In so doing, they participate in selecting which route their learning experience will follow. Those who enter the Intensive Program's small groups work with 4-7 fellow learners under the superivision of a rotating team of two tutors. In the groups, learners prepare language experience stories and read from texts which they themselves select. Most reading materials come from the program's small library, although some students bring in materials which they have selected in bookstores and in the public library's Centers for Reading and Writing. Within the groups, learners alternate from working alone, to working with fellow students, to working with tutors.

The writing instruction follows a "process writing" approach, in which each learner writes as much as he or she can, not initially worrying about spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Staff encourage learners to use invented spelling and to leave blanks where the "correct" forms of words are not known. Emphasis is placed on making the text as meaningful as possible for the learner. The tutor then reviews the learner's writing and discusses problem areas.

As one staff member describes this approach:

> (As a student) you start wherever you're at, which itself has value. The student writes about something of personal value as best as she can, regardless of what it looks like. Don't stop the flow of your thinking, get it down the best you can, leaving blanks where you don't know a word.

The students thus work on what they already know. Only one skill is dealt with at a time, within the context of what they already can do and are interested in. The students compose for meaning, according to legitimate steps which they develop themselves. This frees the student from worrying about externally-imposed standards. It separates the message from the form, not saying that the form isn't important but saying that it is only part of the writing process, not an end in itself. Although the instructor and fellow learners ask probing questions of the learner, the final decisions about the writing are left in the hands of the learner. Typically, the process goes through several stages, including a rough draft, a revised draft, further editing, and then a final draft. "Sharing in a group format is essential all through the process," as one staff person put it.

In a typical reading session, each student will engage in silent reading of a text, like the Bible or an adventure story, which he or she has selected. The tutor will periodically stop by to ask the student to explain what is going on in the story while at the same time getting the student to think ahead.

Because the program only goes up to the 5th-grade reading level, there are no students who are adequately advanced to take on an independent role as peer-tutor within the program. However, because of the group process used in the Intensive Program, there is a substantial amount of help given by students to each other. Students have instituted their own "mentor" buddy system to help new students.

Staff feel that this approach leads to a rapid development of students' skills and self-confidence. LV-NYC's experience with this approach is seen as supportive -- at the adult level --of the findings of Graves, Calkins, Murray, Harste, Smith, Atwell, Boutwell, and others who have found that children learn to speak naturally with encouragement and likewise learn to write and read in that way as well.

In all of these reading and writing projects, learners are encouraged to build on their own existing skills -- and to rely on the help of fellow learners — rather than focus on their weaknesses. In its first year, the program reported that "85 percent of the students had doubled their reading level, and the other 15 percent had made significant gains." In one baffling example of program success, a student whose skills tested at the second-grade level is reading -- and understanding -- a best-selling novel.

Apart from demonstrated gains in technical reading and writing skills, several students have made personal gains while participating in the program. These achievements have included successfully completing the application process for a city job, dealing with health-care problems, and getting off welfare. Participating learners are seen to have become "more verbal, take more initiative . . . not just sitting there as passive learners but as active learners, more in a partnership with the tutors they were working with. Although the tutors serve as facilitators of the groups, the students were the ones who guide what happens there. It's really based on controversial issues, and critical thinking on controversial subjects." One other possible indication of the program's effectiveness is the fact that the attendance rate of students in the Intensive Program is higher than that of students in the one-to-one tutorials. That higher attendance rate might, however, be attributed to the "self-selecting" nature of the Intensive Program's students, in that the IP might be attracting students who are particularly highly-motivated, willing to, for example, put in the greater number of hours per week which the program demands.

The topics used in the reading and writing activities are normally identified by the learners themselves. Initially, students had some difficulty getting used to this idea. In the second year of the program, however, learners have become more comfortable with the process and have initiated and developed activities around such personally-meaningful themes as black history, reading the Bible, and reading to their children. As a way of getting new students to get used to the idea of talking about personally-relevant themes, one staff member asks them about their jobs, what happened when they were riding the subway to the session, or whether they feel nervous about being in the program.

According to a project document: "In a group, learning is socially motivated. . . . As students pool their knowledge, the knowledge of the group as a whole expands. As a result, students are exposed to . . . different strategies. . . . Students discover that they have a responsibility as both writer and as a listener. For these reasons, the role of the teacher as an authority figure diminishes and students experience more control over their ideas."

Another document from the program's early stages presents four basic ingredients for the program:

> 1. Time -- consistent chunks of time in actually engaging in reading and writing;
>
> 2. Responsibility -- where they are encouraged to make decisions as to what, how, and why they are reading and writing;
>
> 3. Interaction with others -- to confirm what meanings they are composing within their writings and readings, and nudge their understandings further;
>
> 4. A literate environment where the previous three elements are fostered.

A third project document explains that an intensive immersion (consisting of 3 nights per week, for a total of 6-8 hours per week) into the reading and writing process is needed because most traditional programs don't provide enough time for learners to make significant gains in their skills. To ensure learners' commitment to this demanding schedule, each learner makes a contractual agreement to attend fifty hours of instruction. When that fifty hours is completed, a new contract for another fifty hours is agreed upon. A pre- and post-test is administered at the beginning and end of the fifty-hour period, to help learners and staff to assess the learners' relative progress.

One staff member says that, whatever the theory behind the program, whatever success the program has had is ultimately attributable only to the sense of achievement which students have felt in the program. Learner interest in the program is reflected in the fact that, as the program progressed over time, learners became increasingly active in controlling the program. They increasingly planned what they wanted to do, carried out field trips to such places as the Museum of Natural History, and arranged special educational activities outside normal instructional time, as when speakers were invited to make presentations on black history. These "extra-curricular" activities were in turn integrated into the reading and writing instructions. For example, as an outgrowth of a Black History Month activity, one student found that his great-grandfather had been on one of the last slave ships to come to the United States. He has now tracked down references on the subject and is reading them, writing on the subject, and making presentations on it.

Some Intensive Program students have become so self-confident that they have begun taking active roles in speaking to new students, talking at benefits, doing workshops in the community, and speaking at city-wide and national conferences. One workshop aimed at both tutors and other students, focusing on the topic of "how to write a play." A student support system has developed within the program, with students encouraging each other and discouraging dropping out.

Staff feel that the Intensive Program approach is applicable to all levels of learners, although the skills of the lowest-level learners have increased at the fastest rates. Initially two students were particularly active in the various aspects of the program. Eventually one-quarter, about 25, of the Intensive Program students became regularly active. The active students in fact limited the number of students participating in the special seminars which they organized, to avoid diluting the effect of the activities.

Staff admit that sometimes tutors with a more traditional perspective on education are skeptical of the approach used in the Intensive Program. In such cases, these "traditional" tutors are matched with students who indicate a need for a more traditional structure. Such students include those who might be extremely learning-disabled, or who otherwise show a strong preference for "workbook-type" learning. Tutors who resist a more participatory style for learners are sometimes also put in other helping roles within the program. They are also sometimes asked to sit in on an Intensive Program session, to observe the participatory activities in action, in order to help them understand what those activities are all about.

As noted above, some students likewise resist the non-traditional "feel" of the Intensive Program. These students are encouraged to opt for the more traditional one-to-one tutorials or less intensive small-group format. However, other students have become enthusiastic about the Program, as indicated by one student who said "This is the first time in my life where I think I can express my opinion."

The Intensive Program is seen by staff as fostering "critical thinking" among students. One staff member defines critical thinking as "when a person doesn't take things on face value, (when) they're willing to express their opinion and look at different perspectives, to use other resources and their own experience as a resource, to compare and contrast things, and to think of things in a more open-ended way rather than in a right/wrong way. . . . They're more aware of their own learning strategies."

As a practical means of facilitating critical thinking among participants, one student introduced a series of "why" questions around which students discussed issues of importance to themselves. In another example, a team of learners and instructors wrote a play entitled "Monday Morning Unemployment." It dealt with the problems faced by an adult whose low-level literacy skills prevent him from filling out a job application. The editing process which the team went through allowed a lot of give and take so that distinctions between students' and tutors' roles blurred. In the process, learners became more aware not only of the topics dealt with in the play, but with the writing elements of plot, dialogue, and character, as well. Learners with beginning-level writing skills participate in play-writing by tape-recording their contributions; these recordings are then transcribed and integrated into the overall play.

The Intensive Program thus places an emphasis on the personal development of the learner. This emphasis is described by the same staffer as follows: "Literacy is (a process of) becoming a learner, a lifelong learner. It's not just being able to fill out a job application or to read signs. It's to be able to express what you're thinking. . . and feel good about yourself. That's what learning is." Another staff member sees "why" questions as political in nature, however, in that such questions challenge people not to accept things at face value.

One staff member acknowledged the difficulty of balancing technical reading and writing "skills" with such learning objectives as improved self-image and critical thinking. As she put it: "It's hard to (get the student to) deal with 'You don't know where to put a period', when (the student has) just said something extremely profound." Put another way: "I feel that what people have to say is important, but I also know I have to work on spelling." One staff member tries to keep spelling in a healthy perspective by focusing on just three spelling problems per piece of student writing; the correct forms of each of the three words are put on separate index cards for the student to review at a later time.

One staff member sees another potential problem in a participatory format like that of the Intensive Program, that of "sharing power." "It's not so hard when everything is going well, but it's not so easy when conflicts arise," she said. One example: She once brought a visitor to observe the program and then asked the students if it was all right for the visitor to stay; the students later objected and told the staff member that she should have asked them in advance. From such experiences the staffer has concluded that, if a program structures itself to allow for student input, it will have to allow itself to change over time. Staff should realize and respect this possibility, and be willing to listen and change.

This staff member feels that a practitioner needs to have an ideology which recognizes that nothing is neutral but which at the same time doesn't tell students how they should think. Practitioners need to be overt about what they believe but shouldn't force their perspective on others. "For me, force-feeding is wrong."

Staff should also recognize the possibility that, when personally-meaningful topics are dealt with in the instructional process, feelings of anger and sadness might emerge. Staff and learners have to be prepared to deal with those feelings, as well.

The same staff member feels that the group format, as it has evolved in the Intensive Program, has an inherent strength which enables groups to overcome problems which emerge. She says that, for example, "groups seem to have a survival instinct (which allows them) to weed out people who don't show respect to others. There's a lot of peer pressure involved. People confront one another in groups. One man in his 50's was told: 'Look, you talk too much.' This was a shock to him because that was how he got by his whole life."

The Intensive Program's strengths have sufficiently outweighed its real and potential problems, to the point where it has now begun to influence the shape of the original one-to-one tutorial component of LV-NYC. Staff feel, however, that more study is needed to clarify what about the Intensive Program is working and for what reasons.

Management Practices

LV-NYC has increasingly tried to involve students in activities outside the regular one-to-one, small group, and Intensive Program instructional activities. Students have been involved in public awareness, advocacy, social, fundraising, student recruitment, tutor recruitment and training, and other activities. In one case, a student has been serving on staff in the role of "student advocate," under a VISTA grant. These activities evolved slowly to a point where, in mid-1986, staff decided to make a concerted effort to expand and strengthen these learner participation activities through the creation of a system of student councils.

The origins of these extra-curricular activities are traced by staff to the active student involvement within the Intensive Program, described above. Enthusiastic students gradually were taking on public-speaking, student-recruitment, and other active roles, and demonstrating to staff the potential of learner participation. During this same period of 1985-86, LV-NYC conducted a student needs assessment which identified various personal needs with which it was felt LV-NYC might be of help. These needs included jobs, housing, and social services in particular.

LV-NYC decided to create a "student advocate" position, which was initially filled by a particularly active student. He was to circulate among the program sites to in some way identify special projects which might be of use to the students. Staff now admit that the advocate idea was initially vague, but based on a desire to help students with "non-reading-and-writing" needs.

It became apparent, however, that the student advocate could benefit from further guidance, and a college graduate was hired to fulfill that role. This advocate "team" began to introduce the idea of the advocate positions to students and received various suggestions for what their role should be. They were told to serve as "cheerleaders," keeping up student morale. They were also told that they should help people find and obtain jobs. Some students expected the advocates to come up with issues for the students to discuss.

One of the first concrete projects for the advocate team was the showing of a film about Martin Luther King at several of the program sites. These showings included discussions about Dr. King's life and the theme of "I have a dream." Out of these events it became clear that the student member of the team had real leadership skills. His work was by now being supported by VISTA funding.

During 1986, the professional advocate worked closely with the VISTA advocate, co-leading student meetings together. Prior to meetings, the team would review what they felt would be happening in the session. Afterward, they would assess what actually happened. With this process, the VISTA advocate gradually developed his leadership skills.

As the advocate team met with students in each site, the students gradually began to accept the idea of discussing their needs with the advocates and with each other. Students made specific suggestions for improving the program, including requests for a new, more-easily-used sign-in sheet, more low-level reading materials, and creation of a driver's education class within the program. Staff felt that student meetings should be open both to immediate needs like these and to longer-term issues that the students might identify. Students' willingness to express their interests seemed to increase as the students saw that the staff had an interest in listening.

Program goverance

Staff felt that the interest shown by learners in these sessions was sufficient to warrant creation of a system of student councils. Students in each site would elect two representatives to serve on a student council which would meet monthly. That council would in turn elect a representative who would serve on LV-NYC's board of directors.

The program hoped that such a system would strengthen the position of the student serving on the program board of directors. Historically, LV-NYC had had a student serving on the board for many years, but that student's participation was limited in part because of scheduling conflicts, as the board met during the day, when the student was normally at work. But staff also suspected that the student was intimidated by the prospect of serving on a board composed primarily of professional-level people.

Staff also hoped that greater participation by learners in program governance would allow students to learn about how the program works and, in turn, become more active in initiating future directions for the program. The committees would also serve as conduits through which the program could relay information to students about program activities. Staff recognized the danger of student participation remaining at a "token" level which accomplishes little more than good public relations for the program. However, staff also argue that students should be given the opportunity to see for themselves just what might -- or might not -- be accomplished by student councils.

The idea of the student councils was introduced to students by the two student advocates, at initial meetings at each program site. Students asked about the purposes and responsibilities which the position of student council member would entail. The response of the Intensive Program students was generally enthusiastic, with about 50 percent of those students saying they wanted to run for the position. Some students supported the idea but declined to run for the office on grounds that they didn't have enough time. In one site, students said that attendance at the site had been low during the summer months and that therefore students didn't know each other well enough to elect anyone. In some cases, students urged outstanding students to run for the position. Students interested in running for the position were told to prepare a "campaign speech" which they would be asked to present at the following meeting in which balloting would take place.

At that follow-up meeting, candidates presented their campaign speeches, describing what they hoped to accomplish as student representatives. Some admitted that they were interested because they felt that the position would be good for them, allowing them to learn new skills. Staff felt that many of the campaign speeches were not very "good," but attributed this to the fact that most of the students had never done anything like it before and were therefore not very well prepared.

Advocacy and fundraising

As the student council idea developed, students simultaneously were fulfilling other roles within the program. Several students have been interviewed for newspaper, magazine (including a People story), radio, and television news coverage. Learners also participated in a major fundraising event which featured several nationally-known authors[3] reading from their works. LV-NYC students likewise read from their own works and made speeches to the audience. Pre-appearance "jitters" were common for many of the students involved in the activities. However, the learners' earnestness and courage apparently more than compensated for that nervousness. This was especially true at the fundraising event where a frail-looking woman student received a standing ovation when she spoke on what it is like to be illiterate.

Learners have increasingly been called upon by the executive director to accompany him when he makes the rounds of funding sources. The director feels that the students can make a strong case for the value of the program, stronger in many ways than anything the director can say.

Learner recruitment and intake

Learners are also now taking leadership roles in orientation sessions for new students. Veteran students explain the program to the newcomers, emphasizing the participatory philosophy of the program. Staff feel that this learner participation in recruiting and orienting of new students is valuable. They point to statistics which show that, before veteran students took leadership roles in the process, of 60 prospectives who would show up at the first meeting, only 10 would come back a second time. Now, of an initial 60 applicants, 57 will come back for initial testing and, of those, 2-5 percent are referred to other programs and the rest stay on to begin instructions.

Staff recruitment and training

Students are likewise involved in recruiting of new tutors, traveling with staff members to a corporate office building, for example, to speak to a group of company employees who are considering signing up as volunteers with the program. In those recruitment sessions, students give testimonials about the gains which they have made in the program.

Tutor-training is another area in which learners are involved, providing suggestions to new tutors about the needs of students and, in some cases, role-playing the part of a new tutor, to demonstrate how students might see tutors. The program has implemented a series of paired workshops, called "tutor enrichment days," in which tutors and students will meet at the same time, although separately, and deal with a common topic, like "how to fill out a job application." Staff feel that students benefit from such an arrangement because it removes some of the mystique of the traditional role of teachers. Tutors are likewise seen to benefit from seeing how students take participatory roles in the sessions. In one such session, the VISTA student advocate asked for a moment of silence in honor of the space shuttle astronauts who had recently died. Staff saw this as an indication of the awareness which many students have of current events, contrary to the stereotype of the adult illiterate as uninformed.

Support activities

In its earliest attempts at fostering new forms of learner participation, the program introduced the idea of a monthly "celebration night," in which students, often with family members and friends as guests, socialized and read from their own writings. Learners gradually felt that this arrangement was boring, however, and it was then agreed to alternate those types of meetings with other activities which were both social and educational in nature. These alternative events included a performance by a classical violinist, and field trips to book stores, museums, and libraries.

Evaluation

When attendance in the Intensive Program dropped during the summer of 1986, staff were puzzled about the causes of that apparent decline in interest. It wasn't clear whether it was due to summer vacation schedules or to a decline in enthusiasm now that the program had entered its second year and the novelty of the program was fading. Staff felt that students should be consulted to determine the causes of the attendance decline, and plans were made to form a special student committee to look into the matter. LV-NYC places a special emphasis on such formative evaluation, seeing the standardized testing required by state and city funders as of limited value in terms of getting at the key needs of the program. The program has developed a special evaluation system which looks at such things as "dropout rates" to more clearly determine what "dropouts" really represent. In one such investigation, it was found that students tend to come back to the program when they are "pursued" by the program. This was seen as an indication of insecurity on the part of students who are not sure that they are really "wanted."

Conferences

One other learner activity has been that of attendance at national LVA conferences in 1985 and 1986. Learners helped to organize a raffle aimed at raising funds to support travel for more than a dozen LV-NYC students to the 1986 conference in Chicago. At the conference, LV-NYC actively participated with students from other LV affiliates, to plan and carry out several presentations made to the conference's general audience. In February 1987, LV-NYC students and staff played a central role in planning and running a city-wide literacy conference which aimed at showing what programs were doing to put students in leadership roles.

Staff feel that all of the above learner participation activities are still in a beginning stage, although the results have been encouraging to date. As the associate director put it: "We haven't even begun to use the potential of the students, but we're trying. The students are showing us where to go on this."

The Center for Literacy

General Description of Program

The Center for Literacy (CFL) is an 18-year-old, Philadelphia-based, volunteer literacy organization with one-to-one tutorials and classes in over 60 sites around the city. Curriculum focuses on the lowest-level learners up to 5th-grade reading level, and instruction is provide primarily in one-to-one tutorial format, although small groups and classes are becoming increasingly popular within the program. An eclectic instructional approach is used, making use of Laubach, LVA, commercial, and "real-life" reading materials. Funding has since 1982 increasingly come from corporate sources, with a jump in corporate funding from $5000 in 1982 to $145,000 in 1984. The program is overseen by a board of directors whose make-up now reflects a growing corporate involvement in the program.

The population served by the program reflect the many ethnic groups found in the city. In 1985, 1018 students received tutoring (898 in basic literacy, 189 in ESL), and a total of 731 tutors were trained (581 for CFL itself, 132 for other agencies).

CFL also has a publications program which prepares practical guidebooks for literacy personnel. CFL collaborates with the University of Pennsylvania's Literacy Research Center in a research-and-development project aimed at developing a more appropriate needs-assessment instrument for use with beginning-level adult readers.

Overview of Participatory Practices

CFL has since 1984 introduced an increasing number of types of learner participation practices in both its instructional and management components. While the program started off as a fairly traditional one-to-one volunteer tutorial program in the Laubach mold, several out-of-the-ordinary factors combined to steer the program in a more participatory direction. For one, the program made use of not only the Laubach approach but also that of LVA, which, relatively speaking, provides for more learner participation. This is particularly evident in LVA's emphasis on the language-experience approach for writing instruction.

CFL has also had a history of working with staff and graduate students at the Literacy Research Center (LRC) across the street at the University of Pennsylvania. These LRC personnel brought with them ideas borrowed from ethnographic work in Third World literacy situations, as well as other literacy theory and practice originating from roots unfamiliar to most mainstream literacy practitioners in the United States.

A third influential factor was the presence of a relatively large number of professional staff in the program, many of whom had had training and work experience in approaches to instruction and management which were relatively more supportive of the notion of learner participation practices.

A fourth catalyzing influence was that of Laubach's 1984 biennial conference in Tacoma, Washington. That conference placed a special emphasis on the theme of "involving learners." This emphasis was manifest not only in conference workshops in which the why's and how's of learner participation were discussed by practitioners, but in the actual participation in the conference of a contingent of students from a number of Laubach affiliates nationwide.

Three CFL students attended that conference and returned with ideas on how CFL should strengthen its fledgling efforts to introduce learner participation practices into the program. One student's rationale, as quoted by a staff member:

> The students need the tutors. And the tutors need the staff. But nobody needs the students.

That "telling comment" (as the staff member now refers to it) shortly predated the awarding to CFL of a "310" special-projects grant from the state Department of Education. This grant was to underwrite the development of the student support groups described below. The confluence of the Laubach conference and the state grant are seen as the starting point for much of the participatory activity described in the following pages.

Instructional Practices

Planning and evaluation

Like most literacy programs, CFL claims that it tries to respond to goals identified by learners themselves. Unlike many programs, CFL has instituted several mechanisms aimed at involving learners in identifying their goals and assessing their relative progress toward them.

For some time, program staff have, in their initial meetings with students, asked the students to identify where and when they would like to receive their instructions. Staff have also asked students to identify what they hope to accomplish in the program, asking them to assess what they hope to get out of learning to read. Both long-term goals -

- like "getting my GED" -- and short-term goals are elicited during initial interviews between the student and a professional CFL site coordinator.

For several reasons, a particular emphasis is placed on identifying achievable short-term goals, regardless of whether those goals lead in a linear way to a longer-term goal. The program recognizes that students, as adults with adult responsibilities, frequently have to drop out of the program due to family circumstances (such as when a spouse gets sick), work demands, and other factors. By focusing on a series of short-term goals, the learner is better able to feel a sense that he or she has at least accomplished something in the period in which he or she participated in the program. In the words of one staff member, the learner would thereby be able to say: "Okay, I've accomplished these three things. I have to drop out of the program for right now, but I'll be back when I can and then I'll go on." This is in contrast to leaving with the sense of disappointment summarized by the staff member in the phrase: "Oh, this is one more time I didn't get my GED."

This process of involving learners in goal-setting has recently been further developed in the Adult Literacy Evaluation Project (ALEP) being run jointly by CFL and the LRC. This project aims at developing an assessment tool which gets away from traditional assessment methodologies which tend to separate assessment and instruction, isolate reading and writing "tasks" from their normal context, focus on learners' deficits, and require limited critical analysis on the part of the learner. ALEP sees the initial assessment process as a first step in the instructional process in which students are encouraged to discuss their perceptions of reading and writing and to then begin to develop an awareness of their own use of print. ALEP hopes to enable the program to more closely match instructional materials with student goals and skills and to involve the student more fully in the reading and writing process.

The initial ALEP interview, for example, has new recruits review a list of potential learning goals with a staff member. This list is a compilation of goals identified by CFL students over the years. It consists of both "functional" goals (such as learning how to take the written test for the driver's license) and affective goals (being less dependent, for example). The recruits are asked to measure each goal against their respective interests and skills. In the process, the students clarify for each potential goal whether they can already perform the task or, if not, whether they are interested in accomplishing it.

In ALEP, students also clarify what they can or can't currently do in terms of reading. They do so by trying to read (1) "real world" texts in their natural contexts, like the word "Jello" on an actual Jello box); (2) "real world" texts outside their normal context, such as the word "Jello" on a plain piece of paper; and (3) the type-written writings of other CFL students. Students are also provided with a set of reading materials of varying levels of difficulty and asked to select one to read. By observing which materials the student selects, staff can get a better sense of the relative willingness of the student to take risks in reaching for challenging reading materials.

The results of this initial assessment of learner interests and skills then become the basis for determining at what point and with what materials to start the instructional process. At the first tutorial session, the professional coordinator, the tutor, and the student discuss the student's list of identified goals, and the student is asked to identify three goals to start with. Reading materials corresponding to those goals are selected by the coordinator, and instructions are begun using those materials. As time goes on, learners are encouraged to actively select their own reading materials from either the CFL library, the public library, or elsewhere. While a question might be raised about the quality or relevance of texts selected by inexperienced readers, staff feel that, over time, people find their own reading "niche," depending on their evolving interests and skills. What might be relevant one day might be less so the next. Learners are thus encouraged to continually develop their own "curriculum" by actively assessing and selecting from a range of materials.

As instructions progress, learners are encouraged to give feedback to the program -- and in turn receive feedback -- through a combination of informal discussions with tutors and professional staff (which can occur at virtually any convenient time) and in more-formalized interviews with the professional site coordinator (which occur at intervals of fifty instructional hours or six months, whichever comes first). Learners are in both situations encouraged to assess their own progress, identify new goals, and discuss problems which they are encountering, including problems with their tutors. For the formal 50 hour/6 month interview, a second ALEP interview presents the learner with issues raised in the first interview and asks the learner to assess his or her relative progress in those areas.

Learners are also encouraged to pass any concerns -- about such issues as their relationship with their tutors -- on to the Center via the two students now serving in the program as VISTAs. (See below for further descriptions of the roles which these student VISTAs play.)

Implementation

Student reading groups. One instructional option open to CFL learners is participation in student-run reading groups. These groups consist of students who meet regularly to practice their reading under the leadership of two VISTA volunteers who themselves are advanced-level CFL students. These VISTAs select books from the beginning-adult-reader section of the public library and practice their own reading of the texts prior to handing them over to the group. The groups then meet for up to two hours per session during which time they read through the texts and discuss emerging questions with the VISTA leader. It normally takes 1-2 sessions for the participants to get through a book. For many learners, it is the first time they have ever read a whole book.

While a question could be raised about the danger of having "marginally literate" students providing poor-quality guidance to low-level learners, the staff to date feel that this has not been a significant problem. Whatever tendency there is in that direction is counter-balanced by the fact that the participants are supporting each others' learning, a practice seen as being well supported by reearch. There is in this peer-tutoring arrangement the benefit of students working with "role models," successful students who have increased their self-confidence as readers and who now are holding responsible positions as a direct result.

These reading groups were originally initiated by students themselves, in an informal way and in response to their own felt needs. One of the CFL students who later became a VISTA within the program started to volunteer as a receptionist at the site where she met her tutor. She gradually began making friends among the other students at the site, and they discussed what they were doing in their tutorials, problems encountered, and other concerns. Sometimes a student's tutor wouldn't show up or would arrive late, and the receptionist/student would then sit with the student and go through the day's lesson, serving in effect as a substitute tutor. These informal student-to-student meetings gradually expanded to larger numbers of students at the site. When, in turn, the original receptionist/student later was hired on as a VISTA Volunteer within CFL (along with another similarly active student), it was decided that these reading groups would continue and expand under the direction of the two new VISTAs.

Student writing. In the words of one staff member, student writing "is an integral part of the program, and by its very nature is learner participation. It's really creative writing." These writings take the forms of essays, fiction, letters,[4] and poetry. Tutors are asked to emphasize writing for expression in their writing tutorials, rather than to focus on the "mechanics" of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. In order to avoid having students produce writing which is meaningful only to themselves and not to anyone else, learners are asked to share their writing with others. In so doing, the student-writers are encouraged to think of how to make their ideas clear for others.

The resulting student writings are shared via the bimonthly CFL newsletter, among students in the CFL classes, and most recently in a newly-instituted "electronic bulletin board" which is available in the new CFL computer-assisted-instruction program. A University of Pennsylvania graduate student has also been collecting student writings, with the hope of publishing them in a form which will be made available to other students within and outside of CFL.

Under two special research and development arrangements,[5] CFL has introduced donated personal computers into its two new resource centers. Each of these centers is coordinated by one of the students serving as VISTAs. Students come to the centers to meet their tutors and fellow students, select materials from the library, and now use the computers for a variety of reading and writing activities, most of which rely on existing IBM software.

These computer-assisted-instruction activities range from structured drill-and-practice exercises, focusing for example on spelling, to more open-ended writing activities. In the latter, students write language-experience stories, essays, and poetry.[6] These writings are stored in the system and made available for other students to read in an "electronic bulletin board" format. The computers have the added feature of voice synthesizers which "read back" to students what they have written.

One advantage of this use of word processors for writing is that, when the writings are printed out, it produces a neat, professional-looking, tangible finished product for the student. However, some students are intimidated by an open-ended format -- a "blank screen" -- which require students to come up with ideas of their own. For these students, a structured fill-in-the-blanks format is easier to hold onto. CFL's experience indicates that such structured exercises can be tailored to suit specific needs identified by the learner. In one such case, a student studying medical massage arranged to have the list of medical terms to be used in his qualifying exam put onto the computer. He then used the computer to help him practice the spelling of the terms.

CFL staff feel that both the open-ended and structured uses of the computer are useful, depending on the particular interests and skills of the student at any given time. As in the case of selecting of reading texts, students are encouraged to try a variety of the computer programs available, to select those that seem most interesting and useful. The computers also have the advantage of "being there" whenever the student is ready, a constant availability which few tutors or classes can provide.

Staffing the computer sites is seen as having been a positive experience for both VISTAs. They have learned new skills and become even more involved with students. The environment at the computer centers has been one of co-learning, with all involved -- staff, students, and tutors -- learning the use of computers together.

Management Practices

Student support groups

In 1984, CFL had implemented a student support group for the purpose of providing moral support to students in one-to-one tutorials. It was thought that the one-to-one format left students feeling isolated from others in the program and that a monthly all-student meeting would allow them to vent frustrations, share ideas, and otherwise allow them to support each other in ways not normally possible in the program.

In practice, the groups started off more or less as hoped, but interest began to wane fairly quickly. Students indicated that their time was too valuable to give to too many activities perceived as "non-educational" in nature. Staff then began to alternate "support" meetings with more-strictly-"educational" activities.

CFL had received a special projects grant from the state ABE office to support the development of these support groups. When preparing the final report on the year-long project, staff found that of the 50 students participating in the program, only one dropped out of the CFL program. It was not clear, however, whether this 98 percent retention rate was due to the support groups themselves or to the fact that the participating students (who came to the groups on a voluntary basis) tended to be students who were already more interested in the CFL program, regardless of the effects of the support groups.

Staff never got a clear answer to this question, but did conclude that an insecure, embarrassed student tends to benefit from actually seeing others who have reading problems. Thus, support groups of some type were seen as having a potential for providing that re-assurance, especially for students in one-to-one tutorials who are otherwise isolated from other students.

On the other hand, some students are seen as coming to the program with their lives pretty well "together" (that is, with moral support from families, secure jobs, and other sources) and don't have a particular need for re-assurance from other students. Many of these "more secure" students might thus feel less attracted to support groups, and might prefer to spend their limited time focusing more directly on instructional activities.

Recognition events

While the above support groups didn't work out in quite the way the staff originally conceived them, learners nonetheless are involved in providing recognition and support to fellow learners through their conducting of various recognition events. These events range from relatively elaborate and costly catered dinners to less formal potluck suppers and cake-and-coffee get-togethers. Student roles in putting these events together likewise vary, from collecting money, renting a hall, and hiring a caterer, to merely "helping out" as staff and tutors do most of the work.

Public awareness

Many CFL students have participated in public awareness activities of one form or another, particularly during the period around the PLUS broadcasts in September 1986. These encounters with television, radio, and newspaper reporters were positive in that they sparked among students a certain excitement, questioning, and planning of what to say.

However, these media activities -- particularly with television crews and their equipment -- were sometimes time-consuming and disruptive. In one visit to a tutor's house, a television crew burned a hole in a ceiling panel with their lights and left without even acknowledging the damage. Another crew spent 1 1/2 days with a student, and then never got back to her to inform her that her segment wasn't going to be included in the final version of the broadcast. In another case, a radio interviewer made much of the woman student's good looks, which later resulted in a flood to her tutoring site of curious male visitors eager to get a look at her. However, staff feel that the students dealt with these problems in a positive way, by discussing the irrelevancy of much of the coverage and thereby developing a more critical perspective on the role of the media in the United States.

One other student participated in a more-targeted awareness activity by speaking on a regular basis to 5th-graders in the city schools about the importance of getting a good education. Her presentations were well received by students and teachers and were given coverage in a local community newspaper.

Such media coverage presents a challenge to students who are more accustomed to hiding their literacy problems. One CFL student claimed that, as a result of revealing his problem on a television broadcast, he lost his job. But other students told a CFL staff member that appearing on a broadcast was the best thing they had ever done because, as the staff member reports, "it finally lifted all the burden, and they were finally able to really commit themselves and do what they want to do and not always be afraid that they were going to be discovered."

Student recruitment and retention

CFL hasn't generally instituted formalized student-recruitment procedures because (1) there has historically been a surplus of students, and (2) most actual recruitment of students is done by word-of-mouth, with current students telling friends and family members about CFL. In one of the few formalized recruitment efforts, students went around to neighborhood stores to put up recruitment posters.

Students are, however, more involved in activities aimed at reducing dropouts from the program. A student in one site has taken it on herself to telephone students who aren't coming regularly to say "Why? What happened?"

Program governance

CFL has had a student serving on its board of directors for some time. However, the student, perhaps a bit shy to begin with, has been in the awkward position of being surrounded by relatively "high-powered" types, many of them from the corporate world. CFL hopes to add a second, more assertive student to the board in early 1987, in part to alleviate the pressure on the current student member.

One staff member observed that such communications and "power" problems seem almost inevitable in a situation involving two such different types of people. She thus questioned whether it's really worth trying to have a student serving on the board.

Program staffing

As mentioned above, in 1986 two advanced-level CFL students took on new roles as VISTAs in the program. In this role, they serve as coordinators of the Center's two neighborhood resource centers opened in fall 1986. They lead the student reading groups, oversee the general operations of the two new resource centers, and help with miscellaneous clerical and other duties in the program. Overall, the VISTAs try to respond to problems raised by students. In one such case, students revealed that they thought CFL tutors were paid for the work they did in the program, like schoolteachers. The VISTAs explained that this was not the case, and that the tutors were volunteering their services on their own time.

CFL staff give the VISTAs high marks for their work to date in these new positions. Despite some initial stated misgivings by city literacy officials about the ability of marginally-literate people to handle the demands of a student coordinator position, CFL staff feel that the VISTAs are learning the ropes of their responsibilities quite well. This is despite the fact that, due to an increasing workload, staff have not always been able to give the quantity and quality of supervision for the VISTAs as they would have liked.

In fact, one limitation of this use of marginally-literate readers in staff positions is the amount of staff time required for training and supervision of the students. In this case, VISTA as a federal agency is providing only a small salary and some benefits to the CFL's VISTA Volunteers. CFL must do the training and supervision of the volunteers, along with the paper work required by VISTA. VISTA provides no additional funds to CFL to support these activities.

Another limitation in this promotion of students to VISTA Volunteer status is the occasional resentment which this has generated in some students toward the VISTAs. The resentful ones seem envious of the VISTAs, not realizing -- or, perhaps, wanting to admit -- that the VISTA positions were initially advertised in the CFL newsletter and that all interested students could apply. The two students who were in fact chosen have had to deal with some resentment from other students who apparently suspect favoritism in the way the selections were made.

A third possible drawback of hiring students as staff members is that of raising unfulfillable expectations among students. Students hired on a one, two, or three year basis might very well come to expect that they will be able to stay on as a staff person in the same program or in another similar organization. This might very well not be the case, however, given the limited funding for such positions, and given the limited job skills which many students bring with them to programs. Students might thus be in for a major disappointment if no future positions are open to them, if they don't develop adequate new skills to enable them to find a place on the job market, or if the program fails to help the students see their role in a realistic, larger perspective.

Staff training

No CFL students have been involved in tutor training to date. This is due to the lack of clarity among training staff about just where students could fit into an already-crowded training schedule.

Conferences

CFL students have traveled to the 1984 and 1986 conferences of LLA and to the 1985 LVA conference (where, one student later said, she for the first time felt the possibility of students' influencing their programs). The 1984 Laubach conference was a spark that ignited much of the above participation of learners in "management" activities.

For the 1986 Laubach conference, seven CFL students drove with three staff members from Philadelphia to Memphis. The trip was an adventure for all concerned.[7] At the conference, students' involvement ranged from direct participation in various conference sessions to informal socializing with students from other programs. For 1987, CFL chartered a bus for students and tutors to go to the LLA regional conference in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. Student-VISTAs actively recruited other students and tutors to attend.

Union Settlement House

General Description of Program

Union Settlement House (USH) is a multi-service agency serving the largely-Hispanic community of the East Harlem section of Manhattan. In addition to vocational training, health care, and other services, USH provides a full range of basic education services, including basic literacy in Spanish and English, ESL at several levels, and GED preparation in Spanish and English.*

Overview of Participatory Practices

The many forms of learner participation being used at USH can be traced farily directly to the "social change" perspective described in Chapter II. Staff cite a variety of social change theorists and efforts as key influences in their thinking. In particular, because USH's educational program is oriented to the Hispanic community and because most of the educational staff members are themselves Hispanic, most of the influences cited by the staff have

Hispanic origins.

For example, the liberation theology which has emerged in Latin America since the 1960s is seen as creating a climate within much of the Hispanic community which is receptive to the kind of change proposed by social change advocates, particularly Paulo Freire. Staff members and community members who have been exposed to liberation theology ideas and activities are thus building on a positive foundation already established within the Hispanic community.

That climate has likewise already been introduced into the Hispanic adult education community in New York City through such widely-recognized programs as Solidaridad Humana in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. That program's founder, who has since left Solidaridad, has served as a mentor to many Hispanic and non-Hispanic literacy practitioners now operating social change programs in the city. At least one USH staff member worked directly with him at Solidaridad, and several staff members cite him as a key influence.

When asked whether there were other factors within the East Harlem Hispanic community itself which further influenced the USH brand of learner participation practices, staff members claimed that the general climate within the community is not a very hopeful one, despite some signs that the residents' political awareness has increased in recent years. The climate is not what would normally be considered conducive to collective efforts to improve the local situation. However, despite the bleakness of the current picture, participation by community members in USH's educational and other programs has been active and positive.

A staff member explained this seeming contradiction:

> This is a time of very little hope for poor people. There's little reason to hope that these people's lives could be changed through any program. There's so little happening. . . . (But) part of (the community's active involvement in USH) is the drama of something happening to their lives against a background of desolation. It's unexpected. That's one (possible reason for active community involvement in USH).

Put another way, the USH program seems to confirm the adage of "Nothing succeeds like success." Learners' interest in the program is reinforced by their direct personal experience of personal benefits accruing from participation in the program. They also experience these benefits vicariously through their observations of positive changes in fellow students. As another staff member described this "success" factor: "This is such a dramatic transformation for them that it gives them a powerful investment in the quality of the program." Staff claim that it is this kind of inspiration that leads a student to go into a director's office as a student leader to demand good staff for the program. (See "Staff recruitment and supervision" under "Management Practices" below.)

Another staff member claims that the USH program has shown the participants that "Yes, you have these rights. Yes, you can do things." Participants then feel "I don't have to be down (just) because I was born down."

Staff feel that as participants have learned in the classroom that they can guide their own education, interest in learner participation practices has spread outside the classroom to the extra-curricular "management" activities described below. This development of participatory practices has been going on for a number of years.

A factor which staff see as essential to the program's success is that of the respect and concern which all involved in the program are expected to show for each other. This enables staff and students to discuss sensitive topics avoided in many other programs and to constructively criticize each other. As one staff member described this caring honesty:

> One of the reasons (the students) aren't very negative (in their feedback to the staff) is because they are very aware that we want to help them. . . . We don't threaten them. We aren't domineering or inflexible. We let them justify themselves if there's a conflict or problem. They see that when we criticize, we are not trying to destroy them. They know that we care about them. They'll send a messenger to explain that they can't come, saying it's because they know that we care about them and would worry.

That same staff member, who has been exposed to all of the external and internal influences described above, told a personal story which shows the roots of his own commitment to the USH approach: As a boy he was beaten and humiliated by one of his schoolteachers for using his mother-tongue in school, a language not acceptible to school authorities. As a young adult, he came to see education in the way described by Freire, as a means of restoring "the voice" to the many whose voices have been denied them by oppressive society.

USH's use of participatory practices thus comes from a variety of sources: educational and social change movements in Latin communities inside and outside the United States, the political consciousness of the East Harlem community, the successes which USH students have felt within the program itself, and the personal experiences of staff members as individuals and educators in the larger society. The element of mutual respect -- respect for learners' interests, respect for the rights of participants to voice their opinions, and respect for staff not as "authority figures" but as people who care about the students as human beings -- appears to be central to the success of the learner participation practices that have been developed in the program to date.

Instructional Practices

USH learners appear to have an active, ongoing role in planning and evaluating their instructional activities. They are asked to give input into the planning process via the student committees (described in "Governance" below) and in direct dialogue with their instructors in each class. In fact many instructional activities are designed to allow learners to continually identify new topics for discussion. As such, the distinctions between "planning," "evaluation," and "implementation" of the curriculum are not clear-cut, and this section thus merges planning, evaluation, and implementation together under one heading.

In one example of an instructional activity which encourages curriculum planning by learners, learners are asked to review newspapers and to pull out articles and topics of interest to them. They are then asked to relate these articles to their reasons for joining the program, which range from general reasons, like being less dependent, to more specific reasons. These latter, specific reasons include being able to fill out a job application, to express oneself properly during a job interview, to discuss special health problems with the doctor, to talk with American co-workers, or to pay one's own bills instead of having to ask someone else for help.

Staff use a variety of mechanisms to elicit topics and self-expression from the students. One instructor reports that in some of his initial meetings with one group, he didn't do much "teaching" in the normal sense. He instead

> just sat and talked with them, offering them what in conservative places would be considered "toxic topics." The learners discovered how they through a group can have a voice and claim their power. They get so wrapped up in this, as a human being in dialogue (that) it creates an environment in

> which they participate. It is the environment which attracts them. Sometimes they say they want to come to just sit in the class and not do any scholarly work, but they keep coming.

In another case, the same instructor purposely made mistakes on the blackboard, in order to get the students to question the authority of the teacher. Such provocative activities often meet with resistance from the learners, who expect teachers to always be correct and authoritative. Gradually, however, students learn that, as adults, they have a right to question and debate issues.

In one case, a male instructor's masculinity was called into question when he defended a woman's right to an education. This provoked further discussion, with the students identifying a list of reasons why a woman needs a good education in today's society and economy. This group process is evident in similar participatory activities, in which students work in small groups on a research assignment, collecting and discussing information on a particular issue and then presenting their findings to the whole class. In one such example in an ESL class, groups identified the words they would need to know to be able to fill out a job application.

Another mechanism for evoking active learner participation in the instructional process is through the use of familiar poems.In such an instance in a basic-level Spanish literacy class, the instructor reads a poem familiar to the students and then challenges the learners to offer their own poems. Emphasis here is on development of verbal language skills, creativity, awareness of their own culture, and self-confidence. As the students compose their own oral poems, they see that they can in fact create something and are capable of becoming literate. In another variation of this activity, the instructor offers some key syllables around which learners are asked to compose their own poems. The instructor then writes their poems down and the learners copy them.

In a similar exercise, learners are asked to talk about household tasks familiar to them. In a case in which cooking was the theme, the facilitator asks the learners to describe and record their own recipes. Again, what the learners talk about, write, and read comes from their own experience, tradition, and knowledge. In a session in which health care was the theme, one student who is an epileptic made a presentation to the class about the nature and treatment of that condition.

One obstacle to this process is learners' lack of self-awareness and self-confidence about what they do in fact already know from their own experience. An instructor described a case in which a student claimed that she didn't know anything about math. The instructor responded, "Don't believe that. You have been living in this country for twenty years. You have been returning goods to the store and exchanging them. Don't tell me you don't know about math." The learners are thus challenged to come with examples from their own lives, around which discussions and reading and writing exercises are developed. A student for example brought in a receipt, and the class discussed whether it was accurate and whether the student had been cheated.

Although there is a degree of on-the-spot spontaneity in building instructional activities around topics identified by students each day, these class activities are at the same time organized within a longer-term curriculum. That is, while the curriculum is designed to be flexible and responsive to learners' evolving needs, instructional activities are not implemented willy-nilly, merely in reponse to whatever topic pops up in the classroom at any given moment. Rather, individual activities are designed around particular learner-identified interests, and then fit into a semester structure which allows for a wide range of topics and communication skills to be covered. This structure also provides a focus of activities on days when learners might have no particular topic of their own to focus on.

Staff feel that, as learners see that they can determine the course of their own education, they go beyond identifying individual topics to making suggestions for larger changes in the curriculum. Learners for example have made requests for higher-level classes, for an extra month of classes, for night classes, and for ESL classes.

Learners have four specific mechanisms through which they evaluate the program. These include input through the in-class discussions described above and through the student committees described in "Governance" below. A third mechanism is that of informal meetings between staff and students. A fourth mechanisms is the paper which each student is expected to write or dictate at the end of each four-month period. In that paper, each student makes suggestions to instructors and fellow students for the following semester's activities. All four of these evaluation mechanisms are structured to encourage learners to express their own ideas about the program rather than merely to be "tested" and evaluated by someone else. Students do, however, take tests when they enter and as they progress through the program. However, these formalized tests are seen as only part of a larger evaluation process rather than as the primary means of getting information from participants.

In the above four participatory evaluation activities, learners are encouraged to be open and constructively critical. As one staff person tells his class: "I can't help you if you don't help me. You have to criticize me. . . . We have to identify what we're doing wrong." The same instructor describes his view of the learners' role in the evaluation process: "They don't see me as a 'maestro' but as an individual. They criticize, sometimes they get heated, but so far I've seen only one case of harsh criticism in which someone got rough."

Management Practices

Program governance

USH has two levels of student committees which serve as the mechanism through which many of the forms of learner participation described here are carried out. Each class has its own student committee which in turn sends a representative to sit on the central student committee. Students say that most participants in the program see education as important, and as a result the student representatives take the work of the committees seriously.

In addition to having representatives serving on these committees, USH students also hold monthly student body meetings which all students are eligible to attend. These meetings have an average attendance of 50-60 students. In this monthly general meeting, as well as in the two forms of student committee meetings, students are encouraged to discuss problems or needs of special concern to them. Student representatives are then sent to speak to staff about specific issues, as needed. These bodies also give students a chance to hear from each other and from staff about upcoming events in USH and in the community.

Staff recruitment and supervision

USH students have gotten involved in recruitment and supervision of staff in ways not seen elsewhere in this study. When students learned that a new education department head was to be hired, they asked to be part of a screening committee which would be interviewing candidates for the position. The students identified qualities which they wanted in a department head and incorporated those qualities into the interview criteria. After the job candidates had been interviewed, the students made final recommendations to the board of directors, which in turn made the final hiring decision.

Student involvement in staff-related matters didn't stop there, however. When, due to a funding crisis, USH didn't have sufficient funds to pay the salary of one of the teachers for one semester, the students once again got involved. They raised funds for the teacher's salary through a variety of activities, including the organizing of an income-generating bus trip to Washington, D.C. The resulting income was placed in a special student-controlled bank account. Students kept track of the teacher's performance through use of a time sheet and regular evaluations by the students in his class. When on one payday they forgot to withdraw money from the account to pay the teacher's salary, one of the students offered to withdrew funds from his own personal account so that the teacher could be paid on time. (The teacher gratefully declined the offer.)

Student recruitment

It is common for USH students to informally recruit new students by word-of-mouth. (A 1987 report* says that "85% of our applicants come recommended by our students.") In one case, when USH was about to open new night classes, a special effort was made by the "daytime" students to recruit new students for the night classes.

Social activities

Parties are a regular event at USH, and students take the lead in organizing these morale-building social events. The end-of-semester party is, in particular, a special event, and staff claim that learners are very generous in helping to organize these parties. In addition to the end-of-semester and holiday parties, students regularly organize informal get-togethers. Every Friday, for example, two women participants arrive at the program with home-cooked food for everyone. These events in turn spill over into instructional activities, with participants sharing of recipes -- "sharing their knowledge," as one staff member termed it -- which are recorded by interested group members in written form.

Fundraising

As stated under "Staff recruitment and supervision" above, USH students have organized special fundraising activities, including an income-generating bus trip to Washington, D.C. Proceeds in that case were used to pay a teacher's salary for one semester.

Field trips

The above bus trip to Washington, D.C. (See "Staff recruitment and supervision" and "Fundraising" above.) not only raised funds for the program but provided students with an opportunity to visit national government institutions. This trip in the process served not only as a social activity but as an educational one, as well.

Public awareness and advocacy

Individual USH students have served as liaisons for the program in their dealings with local institutions. In one such case, a student helped to set up meetings between USH students and a local women's organization. Students have also on occasion operated an informal "visitors" committee which acts as host to special visitors to the program.

Community Language Services (of LaGuardia Community College)

General Description of Program

The Community Language Services (CLS) Program was originally started at Queens College in New York City in 1983 and then shifted to LaGuardia Community College in 1984. An off-campus site was selected for the program in the Corona community where a need had been identified for basic skills instructions for the Hispanic community. One hundred students subsequently participated in the Corona program and, in 1985-86, a second site was added in the East Harlem Hispanic community entitled "El Barrio." Sixty students attended the latter program, which was operated in conjunction with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College. The program offers a full range of basic skills instructions for the Hispanic community. These include basic education in Spanish, ESL at all levels, and GED preparations in both Spanish and English. In the El Barrio site, computer-assisted instruction is also offered, with a special emphasis on student writing.

Overview of Participatory Practices

Central to the creation of the CLS program and its emphasis on learner participation is the program's coordinator. She brought with her a wealth of experience in participatory literacy efforts in the United States and in Nicaragua, her home country. In the United States, she served on the staff of Solidaridad Humana, the New York City program which in its early years was a model of participatory activities. She also has worked in literacy activities in post-Somoza Nicaragua, whose literacy campaign has become a model examined by literacy personnel worldwide.[10]

With this experience and a "social change" perspective on literacy, the coordinator set to work organizing the program's three components of basic Spanish literacy, beginning-level ESL, and GED-level ESL. Because it was virtually impossible to locate teachers with adequate background in a Freirian approach to these subject areas, the coordinator had to initially focus on teacher training. To counter the traditional training given to most ABE instructors, the coordinator trained them using the same kinds of Freirian techniques of critical analysis in a group format which they would be using in the actual basic skills classes.

The coordinator sees the program as aiming at two major goals for each learner: (1) to become bilingually literate, and (2) to become active in the community. Put another way, the second goal is a form of social empowerment in that the learner is to become active in a socially-conscious way.

This is in contrast to the notion of merely enabling the student to promote his or her individual self-interests to the exclusion of benefitting others. The program in fact stresses not only the benefits of being able to control one's own life, but the responsibilities and dangers that go with it.

The social involvement of some students has taken the form of involvement in local organizations or in going to college. These quiet forms of involving oneself in community activities and institutions are seen as positive in that they show the students' desire to take control of their own lives. For many this is done with the hope that they will be able to help other people as well as themselves.

Instructional Practices

The program was initially set up with the assumption that Latin American stories and legends would be of common interest to the learners and could therefore be made focal points of learning activities. As the program got underway, this was found to be true to a degree. However, staff realized that they would need to focus on topics specifically identified by the learners themselves as being of more-direct personal relevance to themselves in their present living situations.

In response, the program was structured in its first year so that students had input into defining topics of particular interest to them. Health, transportation, culture, immigration, and housing were areas of interest identified by the students, with housing being the most common. A variety of learning activities were organized around these topics. For the immigration theme, for example, a lawyer made a presentation on that topic, and subsequent discussions and reading and writing activities were based on the issue. These immigration-related activities had a special effect on many of the Puerto Rican students, who are, of course, American citizens without the immigration problems faced by other immigrants from Latin America. These Puerto Rican students became more sensitive to the immigration-related concerns of their fellow Hispanic students of other national origins.

By the end of its first year, the program realized that, because not all of the program facilitators had experience in this approach to education, they would need to more fully develop their skills in this area. Staff development activities were established in which staff members worked as a team to develop curriculum guidelines which they could refer to when dealing with the emerging list of subject areas. In this process, not only was a curriculum developed, but the technical and collaborative skills of the staff were developed, as well. These latter skills included those of asking questions, listening, identifying themes, and leading discussions.

To prepare this curriculum, staff listened closely to students' expressed concerns. Categories of topics were identified and organized in demographic terms. The staff felt it was important to tailor courses as closely as possible to the various needs of the individuals and groups represented in the program. Although all program participants were of Hispanic origin, they were by no means monolithic in their backgrounds and interests. They varied in terms of their employment histories, legal status, nationality, sex, religion, and other factors.

To identify topics which were of relevance to all participants, a student council focused on the question of what resources they particularly rely on in the community. This council identified a local travel agent as a particularly useful resource, in that the agent commonly provided such personal assistance as filling out applications and providing loans for airfares. With such community "resources" as focal points, the learners interviewed the travel agent and a similarly helpful neighborhood store owner, and presented and discussed their report in the class. Learners also demonstrated their ability to cooperate by sharing information on available jobs or housing which they had learned about within their communities. From these class presentations, and from the student council's discussions, common topics emerged which the staff in turn integrated into the curriculum.

While these topics are seen as of common interest to class members, the program recognizes that students might have a variety of viewpoints on any one subject. Learners are encouraged to express their respective points of view, regardless of whether their positions are popular ones.

In addition to developing these participatory curriculum- planning activities, CLS staff designed instructional activities which likewise emphasized active learner involvement. One such instructional medium was that of poetry. Poetry is embedded in the Hispanic popular culture and language, and students generally enjoyed the popular, familiar language used in the poems selected for study. Students were thereby inspired to develop their own poems. This affinity for poetry was particularly strong among students from Central America, where poets are often given hero status.

In another instructional exercise, learners were asked to describe each other verbally. In the process, they develop not only skills of observation and self-expression, but become sensitive to each other as well.

The fact that all of the classes followed a similar participatory philosophy which emphasized trust and respect for all participants -- and solidarity among participants -- helped to reduce potential conflicts among students. For example, the students in the Spanish-language literacy class generally came from lower educational backgrounds than did the members of the verbal ESL class. The potential split along class lines which could have developed never materialized. This was in part because of the overall participatory philosophy of the program, and in part because the two groups at times worked together on educational and extra-curricular projects. Staff saw this spirit of solidarity as important on the grounds that societal forces tend to isolate and splinter minority groups. By fostering a group identity within the eductional setting, the staff felt that these contextual constraints on the community's cohesiveness could be reduced.

In one example of cooperative learning, the different CLS classes met together as a single group during the summer when participants' vacation schedules reduced the number of students and staff available. Students also organized other social and recognition activities, described below.

Staff encountered one obstacle to this participatory approach in the physical layout of the classrooms. Class sessions were held in classrooms in a parochial school building which had been lent to the program by a Catholic parish. Desks were organized in a traditional format of several rows of desks leading up to the teacher's desk in the front of the room. In the initial class meetings, staff had students rearrange these desks in a large cirle or in a series of smaller circles in order to facilitate a non-traditional, participatory style. After the sessions, the students would put the desks back in rows.

However, it turned out that not all desks were put back in their exact original position, and the next morning the schoolchildren had trouble locating the seats in which they normally sat and had stored their personal materials. This led to a series of complaints from the school principal to the CLS coordinator, until the adult students became attentive to the need not to disrupt the order of the desks. They agreed to keep the desks in their original order in order to respect the wishes of their hosts, even if this meant sacrificing some of the comfort which a more casual seating arrangement could bring. In this case, then, a participatory approach had an unforeseen cost in terms of the worry which it caused about seating arrangements. Staff and learners learned to deal with this constraint by agreeing that the quality of their participation in the program was of greater importance than the physical setting in which that participation took place.

Activities are structured to reinforce the notion among students that they need to look to a variety of resources to achieve their learning objectives. Instructors, for example, are regularly rotated among all groups so that groups don't become too dependent on any one staff member. In some cases, instructors have travelled to students' homes to help them with extra work. With such an arrangement, students are put in the position of acting as hosts and friends to the staff members, rather than seeing themselves only as "students" in the traditional, hierarchical sense.

Learners are also asked to provide regular assessments of their instructors' performance. In turn, the coordinator keeps careful record of the levels of involvement of each student. In part, this involvement is measured by attendance figures and figures on dropouts and "returnees." This internal evaluation is considered more significant than the results of the standardized tests mandated by state funders.

In all program activities, staff members are urged to show repect for learners through such means as dressing neatly when they come to class. Staff are reminded that Hispanic students dress neatly to go to the classes and that therefore staff members are asked to do the same. Another means by which staff are expected to show respect for the learners is that of not bringing large numbers of visitors to "observe" the class. Staff are encouraged to recognize that, if they don't show such respect, they are liable to open up sensitive feelings within learners and leave open sores which can take a long time to heal.

Management Practices

Recognition events and social activities

CLS learners organized their own "graduation" ceremonies, complete with student-designed invitations, diplomas, food, dancing, and special awards for friendliness and good attendance. The student council was in charge of organizing student committees which performed such tasks as cooking, cleaning, decorating, entertainment, and shopping. They even formed their own co-ed security committee.

There is also a good deal of time provided for informal socializing among students and staff during normal class meeting times. Class schedules (3 hours per evening meeting, 3 times each week) force students to spend a lot of time with each other in the classroom and at break times, which likewise enforces a group identity.

Advocacy

The learners generally praise the positive effects which the program has had for them. At one graduation ceremony, one advanced ESL student said that in the program she had learned how to help others. At the ceremony, to which outside "dignitaries" had been invited, she spoke strongly on the need for funders to support such efforts.

Program staffing

One graduate of the advanced ESL class was hired on as an assistant teacher in the program. Although she had experienced a year of CLS' participatory learning style, in order to "prove" herself in her new role as assistant teacher, she initially took on the style of a traditional, authoritarian teacher. She soon learned, however, that it wasn't necessary for her to try to dominate others, and she quickly changed to a more participatory style.

As she began to prove herself in her new role, the other students demonstrated their faith in her ability. On one occasion when the lead teacher wasn't able to come to class, the students elected to remain in the classroom to let the "student-teacher" lead the class on her own. The students further showed their affection for her at the end of the semester by giving her a beautiful gift.

In addition to developing skills as a facilitator, this student-teacher showed her growing self-confidence when she wrote a sharp letter of complaint to the college when the college failed to get her paycheck to her on time.

Staff training

Despite the program's efforts to recruit and train staff members in accordance with the program's philosophy, not all staff members immediately understand or support this participatory approach. In fact, sometimes it is not until such staff members see the results of an activity that they realize the importance of the process. In one such case, an instructor not prone to a participatory approach was assigned to work with the most-advanced students who, it was felt, were already strong enough in their participation skills to be able to withstand the teacher's unprogressive tendencies.

Lutheran Settlement House

General Description of Program

Lutheran Settlement House (LSH) was founded in Philadelphia in 1911, under the direction of a community board and with funding from the Lutheran Social Mission Society. The Settlement House's original purpose was to provide residents of the surrounding Kensington-Fishtown community with the tools to make changes in their own lives.

The industrial community changed over the years, as factories moved out and low-income residents remained behind. In 1976, the Women's Program was founded, based on the findings of a community survey which indicated that the neighborhood's women had special educational and employment needs. In its first year, the program instituted three GED classes, along with childcare, practical workshops, domestic-violence intervention and counseling services, and job-counseling services. Today, the GED classes have expanded to a total of twenty five classes which range from the GED level to beginning-level literacy instructions. Most activities are held in the recently-rehabilitated original LSH building, although the program also operates off-site services in a nearby Hispanic neighborhood.

The program has with such outreach efforts consciously tried to involve the full range of the community's ethnic groups in the program. The fact that the program board is largely made up of people living in the community has facilitated such efforts to be responsive to the community's needs. Over 6000 community residents now participate in Women's Program activities each year.

Although the Women's Program does focus on women community members and women's issues, there are on occasion male students and staff members as interest and resources dictate.

Overview of Participatory Practices

The participatory approach used in the Women's Program is an outgrowth of the larger purpose which the Lutheran Settlement House has historically set for itself in the Philadelphia community. The program's conscious efforts to develop participatory practices are traced by staff back to 1976. At that point, the director (who had previously worked in community social change efforts) and staff were aware of Paulo Freire's work and decided to try to implement his ideas in an American context. Staff hoped to develop an approach to education which enhanced the learner's self-esteem, empowered the learner, relied on involvement of the surrounding community, and was non-racist and non-imperialistic in nature.[11] The staff felt that these practices would be in keeping with the Settlement House philosophy of community participation and would therefore be supported by the board.

In fact, the board has since that time generally supported the practices, not only because of the philosophy on which they were based but also because, put simply, the practices worked. As one staff person put it: as long as the educational staff do what was expected of them -- preparing people for the GED test and getting people ready for jobs -- the "how" of what the staff do is left up to the staff.

In practice, staff members generally try to adhere to participatory principles in their work with the learners. However, students often express a very specific need to focus on acquisition of the GED, and they are therefore primarily interested in using traditional GED-preparation materials. Staff see this GED focus as having both positive and negative implications. It is positive in that it helps keep learners' energies focused. It is negative in that it can be stifling of other valuable activities.

On the other hand, staff also recognize a danger of group discussions which are too unstructured and unfocused. In such cases, the groups can degenerate into "kaffee-klatsches," which can leave students feeling that they've accomplished very little. A supervisory staff person warned that, to avoid this problem, "You have to be able to guide discussions carefully, and that's a real art."

By walking this tightrope over the past ten years, staff and learners have achieved some measurable successes. One positive indicator is the program's low dropout rate[12] and high rate of "dropout returnees." Another sign of program success is the frequency with which students recommend the program to members of their families. A third indication is the good reputation which the program has in the community, including in the Hispanic community despite the fact that the program is seen as a primarily "Anglo" organization.

One other important factor used to measure the program's success is the relative community involvement of program participants. Staff hope to enable learners to analyze and get involved in issues which affect their lives and in the process to teach them the skills needed to deal with those issues. A staff member asked a question which is central to the program's mission: "Are we developing community leaders -- people who go from here to become active in their churches, communities, and community agencies, with better skills perhaps than before they came in?"

Instructional Practices

The Women's Program has developed a special mechanism which aims at involving learners in the planning, evaluation, and implementation of their own learning activities. This mechanism consists of the development of a series of "curriculum manuals" by teams of learners and instructors.[13] In this process, staff will first suggest topics, such as oral histories, which they think students would like to read about. Students select one of the topics to try out by reading or writing a sample story based on that topic. If the students decide that they find the topic to be of interest, they then develop a curriculum manual around that topic.

A typical manual consists of one or two short essays or stories written by either a Women's Program participant or by a student in another program. The story is then followed by a set of questions which get at both technical reading and writing skills (such as capitalization, syllabication, and alphabetization), comprehension of the story's content, or general knowledge about topics (like geography) raised in the story. Themes dealt with in the nine manuals developed to date have included women and the world of work, family violence, oral histories,[14] and women's changing roles.

To prepare a manual, each student writes a piece related to the selected theme. The stories are then read aloud and circulated among students in the "author" class itself and among students in other classes, for comments on form and content. Under the supervision of the instructor, each piece is then edited into a final form and incorporated with follow-up questions into a manual format. The completed manuals are then used as reading materials in future class activities by both the "author" class and other Women's Program classes. The manuals are also made available to other programs, to be used as models which can be adapted for use in other settings. The purpose of these curriculum development activities is the development of participants' basic literacy skills through a process of identifying and critically analyzing issues of personal importance to the learners.

The process of identifying compelling themes requires patience, flexibility, and sensitivity on the part of the staff and learners involved. For one manual which was to focus on the theme of "women in the world of work," it was initially agreed that the students would go out and photograph former students now working in various jobs around the city. These photographs would then be incorporated into the manual, along with texts describing the women pictured. To get students accustomed to using photographs in this way, staff asked the students to first bring in pictures of themselves as children and to then talk about their own personal histories. It turned out that the students were more interested in talking about their own lives than in taking pictures of other women in job situations, as had initially been planned. From these activities, the group ended up developing two manuals, one on "oral histories" and one on "women in the world of work."

In the process of writing their oral histories, many other themes emerged which were added to the list of potential future manuals. Domestic violence was a recurrent theme, with the women participants writing stories about family violence, what choices are open to women in such situations, and ways of surviving an abusive situation. Students are encouraged to write on similar personally-important themes for publication in other formats. For the Women's Program newsletter, learners' involvement has varied from year to year, from researching, writing, and editing of much of the newsletter, to merely submitting articles which were in turn edited by staff. Students have also written "pen pal" letters to University of Pennsylvania graduate students; articles and poems for local poetry and writing magazines; and letters to editors and to members of the city council and congress. They even wrote a TV drama on the theme of "Our Family" which, however, was not actually recorded due, primarily, to lack of resources.

In such activities, staff stress to learners the idea that "You have a story to tell. You've lived an interesting life." The manuals -- and other writing activities -- are intended to show students that writing isn't the private property of "highly-educated professionals" but that others can write as well and others can be published.

Staff feel that a key difference between the Women's Program and other language-experience and student-writing programs is that, in the words of one staff member, the Women's Program "focuses on topics of social change or social consciousness or social awareness" to enable students to "express yourself . . . to the people who run the country, the people who run the system, the people in charge."

The same staff member said that, as Freirians, the Women's Program staff teach an awareness of society and of why people are not literate. They help learners to identify what the forces are that play on their lives as women, what control the learners can have and what they can't have. In the process of editing materials developed in the program, the staff focuses on positive messages (like how some women have "made it" out of abusive situations) which show the learners what they can accomplish despite the obstacles which the society has erected in their path. A staff member dismissed the notion that programs might be opening a

Pandora's box by introducing sensitive subjects into an instructional setting:

> These are issues which (students) are thinking about anyway, so you might as well come out into the open about them. This has to be done non-judgmentally, . . . but in a way that's moving students toward an acceptance of each other as human beings.

The staff thus recognize that this approach to instruction has to be introduced carefully. It requires "talented people" who are sensitive to the fact that few students will be accustomed to dealing directly with personally-potent issues in a classroom setting. In the words of one staff member:

> You can't dump (social issues) on students. It won't work . . . You have to start slowly, usually with more traditional materials. Then, when they're more comfortable with each other and with the teacher, they are willing to discuss (these issues). It's better to do it slowly, and then people will talk when they know they can trust you.

To be able to handle the demands of such an approach, staff are encouraged in training sessions to become aware of their own prejudices toward students. Staff are urged to become sensitive to their own stereotypes of adult learners and to overcome their anxieties about the prospect of helping program participants to deal with what in many cases is a harsh reality.

Management Practices

Program governance

The Lutheran Settlement House board is broad in its scope, overseeing the full range of LSH programs, with the Women's Program basic education classes being only one of several such programs. As such there is at present no provision made for Women's Program students to participate on that board of directors. However, within the Women's Program itself, there are several mechanisms through which learners can participate in governance of the program.

For one, there is a student planning committee which meets at least twice each month. This committee is voluntary, open to any interested student. The committee develops ideas for trips, awards, newsletter articles, presentations by students at public hearings, and other projects. Committee members serve as conduits between staff and students for information about these projects and on occasion help with other program tasks such as distributing evaluation forms to students.

Learners also are given the opportunities to evaluate the program, assessing the staff and materials, through informal meetings with staff and more-formal periodic written evaluations. In the latter written evaluations, learners are asked to answer the questions of "What did you like?" and "What would you like to change?" about the program. Input of this type from students and staff was integrated into a major program evaluation.

Program staffing

A good number of Women's Program students have returned to the program as paid or volunteer staff. In the fall of 1986, about ten staff members (one-third of all staff members) were former students in the program. In some cases, program graduates have gone on to work in other basic skills programs in the city. The positions which these former students take have ranged from coordinator, to part-time teacher, to maintenance person.

Training for these former students generally is given on-the-job. Most of these students are hired directly out of the GED program. But the program has also developed an apprenticeship system in which former students volunteer for one semester, working alongside a paid staff member, at which point a decision is made about whether the apprentice will be given a paid position.

Fundraising

Learners engage in a variety of fundraising activities on behalf of the program. "Grassroots" fundraising activities have included bake sales, bazaars, raffles, and sales of old books from the program library. One student raised over $500 for the program by selling advertisements in an "ad" book published by the program. Other students have solicited donations from local businesses.

Participants also operated a small food concession on program premises. The primary purpose of the stand was to provide simple and low-cost foods to students whose schedules made it difficult for them to both come to classes and eat a decent meal. The venture wasn't a major source of revenue for the program, but it provided a useful service to students. Similarly, in the case of a Christmas bazaar, limited funds were actually raised for the program, but it did give the participants the opportunity to exchange toys which would in turn go to the participants' children.

Public awareness and advocacy

Women's Program participants have participated in television interviews, with mixed results. In one case, the television crews provided a structure within which the student could satisfactorily express herself. In another situation, it later became clear that the organizers of the televised panel selected a student primarily because she was a member of a certain minority group, and the interviewers insisted on presenting her in a stereotypical way, as a helpless "illiterate" when in fact she was a resourceful, advanced-level student.

The student planning council (described under "Governance, above) has a certain amount of input into deciding which awareness and advocacy activities students should become involved in. When, for example, the city council approached the Women's Program to ask whether any program participants could testify at a public hearing on the literacy issue, staff turned the question over to the student council for a decision. And, as described under "Instructional Practices" above, learners have been encouraged to write letters to editors and public officials to express their views on issues of concern to them.

Social activities

Students organize regular social activities like spaghetti suppers and other get-togethers. Former students likewise stay in touch with each other via an alumni association which serves not only social purposes but "functional" ones as well. This association, for example, has organized meetings between former and current students and representatives of local colleges and employers, which aimed at helping those students with their future educational and employment efforts. The association also provides a setting in which former students can clarify their goals.

American Reading Council

General Description of Program

The American Reading Council (ARC) is a New York City-based program which has set up a variety of "demonstration projects" around the city which aim at providing models of effective literacy practices for study and replication by other practitioners. Historically, the Council's programs have focused on children in low-income communities. Through bookmobiles, storefront reading centers, and early childhood reading programs in Head Start and school settings, children and their parents were given ready access to interesting reading materials. In those programs, the children were guided to practice their reading and writing skills through "a highly individualized language experience approach which emphasized the link between meaning and print, combined with a daily read-aloud and discussion session." This approach was based on the belief that written language is an extension of their oral language, and that reading problems occur in people who have never learned to link their use of print language with the way they express themselves verbally.

Overview of Participatory Practices

In its work with children, the Council observed that many children's reading problems could be traced to parents' deficient literacy skills. In accordance with its overall view of the reading process, the Council reasoned that adults who have difficulty handling printed language are those that never made the necessary connection between their verbal skills and the reading and writing process. As one staff person put it: "Perhaps it's because when they were in school, they were reading about Dick and Jane when, as Hispanics and blacks they couldn't have cared less about Dick and Jane. . . . In such a situation, they never saw that what was happening on the page was not what was coming out of their own mouths."

With that perspective on the nature of adults' reading problems and the connection between the reading problems of adults and their children, and with a long-term interest in demonstrating the applicability of the work of Paulo Freire in a U.S. setting, the Council decided to establish a demonstration project which aimed specifically at low-income mothers. Not having a community base of its own from which it could recruit students, the Council turned to the Little Sisters of the Assumption, a religious order with a history of providing home-health-care and educational services in the city. The two organizations agreed to establish a low-level-reading project in an East Harlem parish where the Sisters had worked previously. Under this arrangement, the Sisters would in effect provide the community setting (and thereby the program participants) and ARC would provide the educational services. A small start-up grant for a six-month pilot project was obtained from a large state fund which had recently become available for literacy programs in the city. Key moral support and technical guidance were also given by the city's Literacy Assistance Center.

As it was originally conceived by ARC, the project -- to be called the Mothers Reading Program -- would aim primarily at young mothers of the type (that is, of low-income, minority backgrounds) who had historically sent their children to the Council's children's reading programs. By limiting the group to mothers, it was felt that the group would likely have issues in common around which learning activities could be focused.

As it turned out, however, the program soon learned that recruitment of young mothers would be a problem. It was found that young mothers tended to have childcare and other life problems which would make regular attendance in the program very difficult. Some of the above life problems identified by recruiters included marital separations, disruptive family lives, and relationships with drug abusers. There was also a prevailing notion that women don't have a right to help themselves until their children are grown.

Because of such factors and because ARC did not have strong roots in the East Harlem community, staff decided to broaden the focus of the program to include women of any age, from any part of the city, and regardless of whether they were mothers. The program coordinator, herself a young mother of Hispanic origin, began recruiting students via announcements on a popular Spanish-language station and through advertisements distributed in hospitals and job-placement offices.

Gradually, a group of students was assembled, representing a mix of ages and minority groups, particularly Hispanics, Caribbean blacks, and native-born blacks. All were given a standard test and found to be reading at 3rd-grade level or lower. In January of 1985, classes began to meet regularly for five sessions per week in the East Harlem parish rectory, with some students travelling from distant parts of the city. Because available facilities were shared with other parish functions, and because the program lacked any sort of clerical staff of its own, the part-time staff person (who filled the job of coordinator, spokesperson, counselor, and teacher) carried her "office" with her in a bag, periodically visiting the ARC office at the other end of Manhattan but generally having to rely on her own energy and that of the class members to give the program an identity.

Instructional Practices

As a way of getting the program going, this multi-roled staff person (hereafter called "coordinator", for brevity's sake) focused initial instructional activities on the issues of motherhood and womanhood. It was assumed that these themes would be of common interest to a group of women from different communities and who had not previously worked together. As these themes were discussed, however, new themes emerged which the coordinator gradually compiled into a master list. These themes, the coordinator said, "are inexhaustible because there is always something going on in their lives, in their inner lives."

In a typical session, class members might be asked to describe their views or their experience of a particular issue. As the students talked, the coordinator would record key phrases on the blackboard, and then review the written language with the students. Students would then copy the words into their notebooks, for study at home. Students alternate individual work with group discussions, helping each other out when working on individual reading or writing.

Students particularly enjoyed writing their own autobiographies because, as one student put it, "It's something we want so badly to write down." Another student claimed that she wants to put her life stories into a book form, because "It's so precious for me." This process of basing writing and reading on known topics is seen by staff as facilitating the learning of basic skills because the students already know the content and therefore are starting from a position of strength. From the start, sight vocabulary and self-confidence are built quickly in a fairly painless way.

In another activity, learners discussed the various home remedies which they had grown up with. Many of the students who had grown up in Puerto Rico described herbal treatments which they had learned from their elders. The group then went out into the surrounding neighborhood to conduct "field research" by finding useful plants growing wild in vacant lots. They gathered these plants and identified their medicinal and spiritual uses, recording their findings on paper and on videotape.

In addition to dealing with topics which come directly from the learners' own experience, the class deals with "outside" reading materials. The coordinator encourages discussion of a major current event by reviewing articles in a newspaper, recording key phrases on the blackboard, and eliciting from students what they already know or think about the subject. Although most students have trouble reading the dense print and atypical language used in newspapers (and therefore avoid newspapers), they tend to have already picked up a lot of information on the current events via television and radio broadcasts. In another "outside-reading" activity, the coordinator read aloud from the novels Native Son and The Color Purple. In both cases, students responded enthusiastically by discussing issues raised in the readings. Use of materials from such outside sources is seen as having a value in that it exposes learners to new ideas and writing styles.

In all of these activities, the coordinator tries to structure discussions to help learners get at underlying issues. As she put it, students are urged "to take one step back and examine 'why is this?', to get another layer of the discussion going." When, for example, class members had told several stories about injustices perpetrated on them by their husbands, they were urged to consider the larger question of "Why do men hold the power in the household?"

As students examine these issues in this critical fashion, they have found that the root cause of many of the problems discussed is, in a word, poverty. Students are urged to see that "It's not this mysterious, evil force out there" that is causing these problems. Rather, the causes of these problems can be understood through a rational examination by people working together.

In most cases, students are able to handle sensitive subjects in a mature, cooperative way. The fact that the program has enabled participants to get to know each other well, and to know how to help each other solve academic and personal problems, is, in the words of one of the group's leaders, "what's so beautiful about this program." The fact that most of the issues discussed in the group are feminist concerns which participants have a basic agreement on makes cooperative analysis of the topic that much easier.

However, on occasion, discussion of sensitive topics leads to conflicts within the group, a potential problem which, according to the coordinator, practitioners should be prepared for. In one such case, students had gone on a field trip to an art exhibit. One painting depicted a revered Puerto Rican independence leader in a U.S. jail, where in reality he had eventually died. Students began arguing with the artist about his depiction of the leader, and eventually left the exhibit without having resolved the sensitive feelings which had been exposed during the argument. The coordinator now regrets that those feelings never were resolved, because when the group finally did meet again some time later back at the classroom, those involved in the argument didn't want to discuss the issue any more. They apparently wanted to avoid dealing with so divisive a topic.

Despite these occasional unresolved conflicts within the group, the coordinator feels it important that she encourage learners to examine the prejudices which they reveal in their discussions. When, for example, an Hispanic participant said that all Hispanics are lazy, the coordinator (herself an Hispanic) challenged the statement by asking the student to name some actual Hispanics that she knew who were lazy. The group was also encouraged to try to analyze where such stereotypes come from. The coordinator says that, in such cases, it is difficult for her to remain objective about an issue, but that it is nonetheless important for the instructor to try to elicit a balanced, critical discussion of the issue at hand.

There is still another situation in which cooperative discussion of an issue has proven to be difficult. This is a case in which a topic (like a death in the family) is so very painful for one or more group members that it is probably better if the group not be asked to discuss or write about the topic at all.

The coordinator has been pleased to see leadership skills emerge among many of the students. This is despite the fact that students sometimes just don't feel like being very active and instead ask the coordinator to take the lead. One participant, for example, is able to take over leadership of the class if the coordinator has to leave early on a particular day. That student is not especially strong in her technical reading and writing skills, but she has outstanding qualities of leadership and perseverance which enable her to serve as a class "pillar." Learners are encouraged to recognize their own strong points and to pool them in cooperative efforts.

The coordinator promotes this kind of cooperation despite the fact that students come from different ethnic backgrounds. The differences among them are felt to be an asset for the group, despite occasional problems which arise when Hispanic students cannot easily express themselves in English. Overall, these differences are seen to enrich the class and build a sense among participants of the commonness of the illiteracy problem. Participants in the process see that they don't have to remain isolated from each other.

Grammar and other formal aspects of literacy training are likewise dealt with from a similar "self-validization" perspective. Learners are encouraged to view mainstream English from a broader perspective than is usually conveyed in school settings. That is, mainstream English is, for most students, a "foreign language," while the students' own language has a validity of its own. "It's not right or wrong, but is your way of expressing yourself," is how it is presented to the learners.

At the same time, however, the coordinator acknowledges that many students do in fact want to know mainstream English. She recognizes that students have to have conventional English-language skills "because you can't fill out a job application in black English or Puerto Rican English." This balanced view on the role of mainstream English is conveyed in discussions of articles taken from popular women's magazines. In such a case, the group discusses not only the content of the article but the writing style as well. Students are urged to consider the audience that the article was written for. In the process, learners get at issues of class and power in the society and get a clearer picture of who uses what forms of English in what contexts.

Students are not, however, given the message that mainstream English is irrelevant. The coordinator explains that "It's almost patronizing to say that this (example of a student's written work) is fine when actually, if you try to write it that way in another context, you'd be told it wasn't." To deal more directly with the question of what is "correct" and what isn't, the class spends a good deal of energy considering the notion of "What is a mistake?" The coordinator feels that overconcern with "making mistakes" is tremendously inhibiting for many students, to the point where some students become blocked from learning anything. Some students might even drop out of the program in order to avoid the humiliation of being found "making mistakes."

To counter this possibility, the coordinator explains that a mistake is just a step in the learning process. Students are thus urged to see education as a long-term process in which they will encounter problems which they nonetheless can overcome by perseverance and use of their own internal strengths.

The fact that this philosophy has been incorporated into group members is manifest by their increased ability to lead their own discussions. One student, for example, expressed anxieties over the fact that her son was about to get married at a time in which she was just finalizing a divorce. The group picked up on this topic and spent several sessions discussing the romance and reality of marriage. The group put together a "soap opera" account of a wedding, based on their discussion.

In addition to planning and carrying out their own instructional activities, students are frequently asked to evaluate the program. This is generally done informally, with the coordinator asking students to speculate on why a particular student hasn't been coming to class. Students find it easier to talk in the third person about possible weaknesses in the program than to talk directly about their own personal views. The class has also developed its own more-formalized assessment tool, which consists of a series of "thresholds." Each student periodically assesses her progress relative to those thresholds. These internal evaluations are seen by staff as being much more useful than the formal tests (given every 100 instructional hours) mandated by funders.

Management Practices

Although the total number of students actively participating in the Mothers Reading Program at the time of this study[15] was small, they were nonetheless actively involved in several participatory activities outside the classroom:

Public awareness and advocacy

Several students were interviewed for print-media coverage, and the coordinator also put together a video presentation on the program which was aired at various meetings with educators and resource groups. Students themeselves appeared in the production, and plans were made to expand such video activities to enable students to do more of the actual production of the films themselves. Also, when it appeared that funds would not be renewed for the project due to small numbers of initial enrollees, students wrote letters to funding agents to argue for increased funding. For one of the students, this was one of the first letters she had ever written.

Student recruitment and retention

Students have on several occasions made special efforts to recruit new learners for the project, via distribution of flyers in various sites around the city and through word-of-mouth discussions with friends. Students also often make phone calls to fellow students when those students are absent from class for any length of time. These calls are designed to convey the class' concern for the missing student.

Field trips

Field trips are a common element of the curriculum, and serve social purposes as well. Students have made special trips to art exhibits and museums.

Program staffing

Although at this writing this idea was still in the planning stages, the program hoped to make use of some outstanding students as "mentors" to new students when the program expanded in fall of 1986 to a larger number of sites. These "mentors" would serve (possibly with a small salary) as assistants to the staff and as role-models to other students.

Summary and Conclusion

The six case studies presented in this chapter describe how participatory practices have been implemented in a variety of program settings. Two volunteer programs (Literacy Volunteers of New York City and the Center for Literacy), two minority-language programs (Union Settlement House and the Community Language Services of LaGuardia Community College), and two community based programs for low-income women (Lutheran Settlement House and the American Reading Council) are presented in some detail. For each program, a general description of the program and an overview of the program's participatory philosophy are presented. These are followed by more-detailed descriptions of the participatory practices being carried out in both the instructional and management components of the program. Such case presentations not only describe details of individual practices but demonstrate how the practices relate to each other within the larger context of the program.

The cases indicate that practitioners and learners involved in participatory activities do so in response to a variety of personal and circumstantial influences. The outcomes of these activities vary as well, from generally favorable to occasionally problematic. It appears that participatory practices have a better chance of succeeding when they are supported by all involved in the program, including staff and learners. Successful practices require ongoing commitment, planning, and evaluation by all parties concerned, as well as adequate material resources. This is true regardless of the institutional setting in which the practices are carried out.

While programs with a social change philosophy generally provide a more supportive environment for the development of participatory practices, a stated social change philosophy is by itself no guarantee of success for the activities. Conversely, learner participation practices can be carried out within "traditional" program settings, but those using the practices must sometimes steer around parties within the program who are committed to more-traditional educational approaches.

ENDNOTES

1. Literacy Volunteers of New York City, Annual Report (New York: Literacy Volunteers of New York City, 1985).

2. Marilyn Boutwell. "Reading and Writing Process: A Reciprocal Agreement." Language Arts 60 (September 1983).

3. These included Jimmy Breslin, Nora Ephron, and others.

4. Examples of student letter-writing include students writing to the state legislature in favor of a new literacy appropriation, as well as another student who wrote a letter to the Center's newsletter in which she complained of insulting language used in a play which she attended on a CFL field trip.

5. One with IBM and the other under a state grant.

6. One of the VISTAs entered nineteen poems into the system in its initial months.

7. One student who had lived in the city all her life asked the driver to stop the van so she could get a picture of a cow.

8. Union Settlement Association, "Interim Report Form for MAC/AEA Literacy Programs," funding report, 1 March 1987.

9. Ibid.

10. See the Chapter II reference to the Nicaraguan literacy campaign.

11. A staff member cited World Education materials as a source of ideas used in the early days of developing the program. See Margaret Brehmer, ed. AIM: A Creative Approach to Teaching Adults (New York: World Education, 1977).

12. The program's dropout rate is about 20 percent -- many due to pregnancies -- compared to a 33 percent dropout rate in literacy programs statewide.

13. See Wendy Luttrell, Building Multi-Cultural Awareness: A Teaching Approach for Learner Centered Education (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program, 1982.)

14. See Carrie Hawkins, Teaching Reading Through Oral Histories (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program, 1985).

15. This case study was conducted in summer of 1986.

CHAPTER V

ORIGINS, LIMITATIONS, AND STRENGTHS OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

Chapters III and IV have provided information on the "nature" or make-up of participatory practices currently being used in the U.S. adult literacy field. The preceding literature review (Chapter II), national survey (Chapter III), and case studies (Chapter IV) were aimed at producing a picture of the origins, limitations, and strengths of participatory practices developed in the U.S. literacy field to date. These origins, limitations, and strengths are summarized below, in accordance with the Research Methods described in Chapter I and Appendix H.

Origins

Chapter II of this study identified a range of written opinion in support of the notion of learner participation. Chapters III and IV gave further evidence of program models and other influences which have led to learner participation efforts in literacy programs nationwide. From a review of these various print sources and the interviews conducted for the national survey and case studies, it appears that learner participation efforts nationally are in fact the result of the confluence of a wide range of theoretical influences, program models, institutional influences, and the personal and work experiences of practitioners and students. In a few cases, practitioners were aware of many of these influences; more commonly for the practitioners, students, and others using the practices, they had limited awareness of this range of influences. While the parts which these influences play vary from program to program and within programs themselves, they can be summarized in general terms as follows:

Theoretical Models

Proponents of the "social change" argument described in Chapter II were the theoretical influences most commonly cited by the learner participation supporters interviewed. Paulo Freire was by far[1] the writer most commonly cited, although his writings were frequently termed overly theoretical and difficult to understand and "live up to." In the case of one social change practitioner,[2] liberation theologists were cited as key influences. "Humanistic" and "holistic" education models (e.g., Curran, Ashton-Warner) were cited by a few practitioners. Writers supporting the efficiency perspective (e.g., Goodman, Pearson and Tierney, Graves, Calkins, Harste, Smith) were also directly cited as influences by a smaller number of informants, although that perspective was cited indirectly by the larger number of practitioners claiming to use a language experience approach to instruction, an approach which would be supported by the "efficiency" perspective. In one case, Socrates was cited[3] as a guide for those wishing to develop an instructional approach aimed at fostering of "critical thinking" skills in learners.

Program Models

A small number of CBOs were frequently cited as practical program models from which practitioners have borrowed useful ideas related to learner participation. Bronx Educational Services, Push Literacy Action Now, and the Highlander Center were the most commonly cited programs, and the other CBOs cited in Chapter III were also commonly mentioned. Third World social change models, particularly the literacy campaign in Nicaragua, were also commonly cited as influences. Thus, in this case of program models, the social change perspective again appears to be the most pervasive influence on the participation-oriented practitioners interviewed.

Institutional Influences

Apart from the influence which individual programs have had on many practitioners of learner participation, there are the effects which larger institutions have had on learner participation developments within various segments of the literacy field. Within the volunteer realm, for example, the work of Lutheran Church Women has been particularly influential in getting learner participation activities going in volunteer programs.[4] Within particular states,[5] state literacy funding sources in some cases mandate that students be involved in curriculum design or on advisory boards; in at least one state,[6] ABE authorities encourage such practices via grants targeted to programs implementing learner participation practices. Within the "minority languages" realm, the federal Mutual Assistance Agency model is cited[7] as one which provides support to programs which rely on community participation in planning and implementation of activities. And, less formally, the prison tradition of relying on inmates to carry out much of the work within prison walls is seen[8] as supportive of the notion of peer tutoring and other forms of learner participation in correctional education programs.

Practical Experience

Many practitioners and learners cited practical "life" and "work" experience as a key source of their interest in learner participation activities. In the case of "life" experience, many of these practitioners are seen to have been influenced by the civil rights and student activism movements of the 1960s. Many were also seen as having been influenced by experiences in Third World settings via international exchange organizations like the Peace Corps. The "Peace Corps types" were cited by one source[9] as having developed the ability "to tolerate ambiguity and chaos," a quality needed when trying to shape a literacy program according to continually evolving learner needs and abilities. In a small number of cases,[10] a religious conviction in the righteousness of social justice was cited as a motivating force. Influential life experiences also included less positive experiences as "victims" of illiteracy. For one student,[11] his humiliating experience as a school child led him to want to "strike back" at the system; he cites this feeling as a motivating factor in his current work as an activist in the volunteer literacy realm. For one immigrant practitioner,[12] the difficulties which she faced as someone who had to learn English have since inspired her efforts to develop a social change ESL program. Another highly-visible student leader[13] had learned the value of being able to publicly speak about his personal problems through his experience in Alcoholics Anonymous support groups.

Many practitioners claim that their work experience was particularly influential in steering them toward a learner participation philosophy. Several[14] said that they had learned "the hard way" that traditional approaches didn't work. They also learned in turn that learner participation activities did produce good results. Often these lessons were learned in an unconscious way, through trial and error and "common sense." In some cases, practitioners set out with a general goal, like creating a "human" workplace for themselves and students,[15] "having fun,"[16] reducing the dropout rate, or having a place where participants respect each other. These practitioners then gradually stumbled upon specific participatory practices which seemed to help them achieve that goal. In a few programs, staff turned to learners for help when staff themselves were not able to carry out certain functions in the program; learners and staff then realized that learners could do a lot in the program, and learner participation activities were then developed in an intentional way. In some cases[17] it was learners themselves who brought these participatory ideas to the practitioners, saying, for example, that they wanted to give something back to the programs which had helped them so much.

Limitations

Supporters of participatory practices cite the following as limitations of participatory practices as they have been implemented to date:

Opportunity Costs

One of the most frequently cited problems[18] for learner participation advocates is that of lack of time. That is, although they might be supportive of the principle of learner participation and interested in developing participatory practices, many practitioners and learners say they don't have the time required to plan and carry out those practices.[19] Time is seen as a precious resource for virtually all programs, and time given to learning about and implementing new activities is seen as time which can't be given to other competing activities. Staff, for example, feel the need to take care of counseling, fundraising, and other vital activities; learners feel pressure to concentrate on the instructional activities which they came to the program for and to take care of personal matters outside the program.

Loss of Confidentiality

For many learners,[20] learner participation activities represent a threat to the anonymity which programs have traditionally provided them. That is, many learners are embarrassed by their basic skills deficiencies, and they agreed to enter the program in the first place only because they felt that their secret would not be spread beyond the program's walls. This is particularly true in programs which rely on one-to-one tutorials, a format preferred by many learners because they feel it assures confidentiality.

As currently used, many learner participation activities -- particularly public awareness, advocacy, and social activities -- require learners to remove the masks with which they have protected themselves. In a few cases, learners appearing in media coverage have gotten into trouble with their employers; in one such case,[21] a learner was fired when his newspaper-company employer read in an article in the paper that the employee was illiterate, a fact which the employer felt created a bad public image for the company. In another case,[22] a women student participating in a radio interview was described by the announcer as being particularly physically attractive; she was subsequently harassed at the program site by neighborhood men who wanted to see what she looked like. Another learner[23] who worked as head cook in a university dining hall participated in a local newspaper interview in which he described his own experience as a functional illiterate; subsequently his judgment was challenged by a subordinate who in effect said that an illiterate couldn't know what he was doing on the job. In other cases, learners simply fear getting into trouble and therefore avoid exposing themselves to the public; for example,[24] one correctional education student didn't want to appear in a television news story because he feared that victims of other crimes in which he had been involved would recognize him and have him prosecuted for those crimes in addition to the one he was already imprisoned for. For these kinds of reasons, many learners avoid getting involved in activities which would threaten the anonymous role which they prefer to maintain in the program. In some instances,[25] learners' families have discouraged learners' involvement in participatory activities because they feared that public admission of a lack of literacy skills would result in embarrassment for the learners or, possibly, for the families themselves.

Perceived Manipulation of Learners

Both learners and practitioners see manipulation of learners as a real or potential danger of learner participation activities. In one conference setting, for example,[26] learners felt that they were being told by staff what they could and could not say at a plenary session where they had initially been told they would have the opportunity to make a presentation to the general audience. Some learners[27] have likewise claimed that certain highly visible "student leaders" are in reality subservient "teachers' pets" or, even less flatteringly, "boys" selected by staff to fulfill staff's own idea of what a student leader is supposed to be.

In some cases, learners and practitioners[28] have resisted "social change" discussion groups as being merely a means for program staff to foist their own political opinions onto learners. In other instances, learners have felt that their role on boards of directors was merely "token" in nature, going through the motions of participation merely to serve some mandated or desired staff notion that learner participation was a desirable thing. There is also a danger that, however well-intentioned program staff are, learners might feel "obliged" to join learner participation activities as a way of "paying the program back."[29]

In some situations, it does appear that learners are being pushed into new roles for which they and staff are not well prepared. Confusion results over who is actually benefiting from the learner's participation, and program staff are thus opening themselves up to charges of manipulating learners to serve their own purposes.

Perceived Threats to Traditional Power Structures

Programs report that, as some learners have begun to be seen as leaders, others within and outside the program have begun to resist the change in power relationships which the newly-empowered learner represents to them. The learner can meet with resistance from fellow learners, from staff members, from learners' friends and family members,[30] and from others.

For example, not all staff in participatory programs are necessarily themselves "participation-oriented" all the time. Enthusiastic students have been known to run into staff persons who resent the altered power relationship which an active student represents. Learners' families can resist learners' involvement in public awareness and advocacy activities, possibly out of concern that the learners will embarrass themselves but also possibly because the families feel that they are losing control of the loved ones they have so long protected. Traditionally hierarchical sponsoring agencies like prisons have been known to discourage development of student councils and other participatory activities because they represent a challenge to the institution's established way of making decisions.[31]

In many cases, learners are themselves one of the strongest sources of resistance to learner participation activities. Many learners have developed a self-image of themselves as quiet, passive, and powerless. If they are to get into a remedial program at all, it is to be as a quiet and passive student who takes what the teacher gives. Participatory activities can be seen by these learners as a threat to their own identities, and those activities are frequently met by these learners with ambivalence or outright rejection.

Difficulties in Assessing Results

Most of those associated with literacy programs -- including learners, staff, and funders -- want to see tangible results for their efforts. Learner participation activities are by their nature not easy to assess, at least not with traditional literacy program assessment tools. How, for example, does a program assess whether a learner has experienced an increased "sense of ownership" for the program or a heightened "social consciousness"? Programs which implement learner participation practices as a way of getting at such goals are open to charges that they are promoting nothing more substantial than "good feelings" among learners.

Practitioners[32] supportive of learner participation practices themselves acknowledge that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of their efforts, since increasing learner self-esteem and community-mindedness are long-term goals which would be difficult to measure with even the best evaluation resources. Students themselves frequently come to programs with much more tangible goals like "getting my GED in three months." These learners might very possibly not be interested in working toward and assessing the kinds of affective and social changes which staff members might have in mind.

For these kinds of reasons, learner participation activities are seen as being difficult to assess and justify, particularly for those not already sold on the learner participation idea and who are perhaps committed to a different view of education. Programs wanting to use a participatory approach are thus faced with the problems of having to find or develop special assessment mechanisms by which those concerned with the program can evaluate the effectiveness of the participatory practices being used. If those mechanisms aren't put into place, programs might then face the problem of having to deal with disgruntled funders, learners, and staff members who want clearer evidence of what the program is accomplishing.

Disappointment Resulting from Unmet Expectations

A number of learners have apparently been disappointed when the expectations which they developed as a result of being involved in participatory activities in fact never materialized. In one example,[33] a learner "worked her way up" from GED student to teacher's aide and, eventually, to assistant director of a literacy program. She eventually left that program and hoped to get further work as a literacy practitioner based on her previous work. She never has found a satisfactory position, one with decent pay and job responsibilities. She has instead had to limit herself to part-time, temporarily-funded positions.

A program administrator[34] provided another related example: learners in his program become so involved in the program that they come to see it, at least unconsciously, as a safe haven which they can always depend on. The administrator claims that in fact this is not and should not be the case, as the goal of the program should be to foster self-reliance for learners. Learners who become too dependent on the program thus end up being disappointed if they expect the rest of the world to be as supportive as the participatory program setting.

In other instances, learners have been asked to identify and discuss problems that need solving within the program and outside in the community. They are then frustrated when larger realities prevent them from actually doing anything concrete about those problems. In one other case,[35] a learner who spent a large amount of time working with a television crew, ostensibly for a documentary which was to be nationally televised, was disappointed when none of her input was in fact used in the eventual broadcast.

For programs and learners alike, such disappointments are at least potential dangers of getting involved in participatory activities.

Limited Technical Quality of Learners' Work

Some staff and learners admit that the quality is not technically all that good of some of the work which learners do in such activities as peer tutoring,[36] managing of program sites,[37] and clerical work.[38] Staff reason, however, that the benefit of the learners' actually performing useful roles outweighs whatever technical costs that participation might entail.

Nonetheless, some students,[39] for example, resist the notion of being tutored by fellow students because they feel that peer-tutoring is not "real" education of sufficient quality. Staff members and funders who retain an orientation to programmed learning might likewise be suspicious of the validity of basing instructional activities on themes identified by learners rather than on skills set forth in printed textbooks.[40] These kinds of concerns about the technical quality of learners' performance in participatory roles can be a cause for learners, staff members, and funders to resist learner participation practices.

Adulteration of Learner Participation Theory

Viewed from any of the three perspectives, the learner participation experience to date has resulted in distortion of the learner participation theory developed to date. That is, the various arguments for learner participation take their lumps when pitted against program realities in which levels of resources, thinking, and commitment are rarely adequate to allow the theories to be put into practice in a pure form. What results are bruised versions of the theory, sometimes barely recognizable as the forms they were intended to be.

This distortion of theory is a source of concern for some interested in the development of the various forms of participatory theory and practice. Those arguing for learner participation on grounds of "efficiency" or "personal development," for example, are liable to become nervous when "social change" advocates use language-experience activities for "political" purposes. "Social change" supporters are likely to see depoliticized learner participation as manipulative and inadequate uses of participatory practices.

It appears that such adulteration of the various theories on learner participation is inevitable in the "real world" of program settings in which the webs of resources needed to create "pure" practices are hard to come by. In such a situation, practitioners have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of learner participation ideals, through rational analysis of why their goals aren't being fulfilled as hope. Or, practitioners can react against the frustrations of the situation in a less reasoned way, by lashing out at learners or contextual factors for their lack of cooperation, or by blaming themselves for their own inadequacies as practitioners. Practitioners should beware of such likely problems and be prepared to take a more reasoned response to them.[41]

Confusion over Purposes and Means of Learner Participation

As programs try to implement learner participation activities and confront the above kinds of problems, they often begin to realize that they are not sure about what they are doing. Those involved often have different goals in mind (as when a learner might be motivated to join a student support group out of curiosity and a desire for fun, while a staff member might be trying to "empower" the learner). Because few learners or practitioners have actually implemented such activities as student councils and student newsletters, they are likely to feel at a loss about the options open to them.

As pressures mount to "achieve" something in a program activity, confusion and frustration can result. Those involved can become discouraged or resentful of each other, blaming each other for the seeming lack of progress. When faced with such a situation, programs can go in any of several directions. In one, they can take a rational approach, acknowledging their confusion and constructively remedying it through frank discussions among learners and staff. They can develop more effective practices by investigating other models, analyzing the program's experience to date, and trying out alternative methods. Alternatively, in a less constructive way, programs can react against their unrewarding experience by reverting to other practices (possibly including traditional, non-participatory practices) with which they are familiar. In some cases, learners or staff drop out and the program collapses because staff or learners are discouraged and feel themselves to be failures. In these latter "worst case" scenarios, the learner participation practices have in effect "backfired," leaving the program with more problems than before.

All of the above kinds of negative outcomes would of course be major problems for any program. They are dangers which programs should beware of and avoid through careful preparations of the staff and learners involved. Chapter VI describes steps which might be taken to avoid such costs. But, as noted in that chapter, even those preventive measures entail costs of their own.

Strengths

It is likely that no practitioners will emerge untarnished from attempts to implement their participatory ideals in a real program setting. That is, practitioners are -- like it or not --likely to have to get their hands and their ideals dirty when trying to using them in real practice.

This dirty situation can be viewed in several positive ways, however.[42] For one, practitioners can see this as a learning experience upon which they can reflect and renew their theory in light of their ongoing practice. Practitioners can also see program settings as opportunities to expose others -- including learners, other practitioners, and other potential supporters -- to participatory thinking and practices. By so enabling these others to become involved and to learn from their experience, learner participation practices can be that much more strengthened by the broader support which newcomers can bring to participatory efforts.

Thus, in addition to being limited in the ways cited above, learner participation practices are seen to have the following kinds of strengths. These strengths are not consistent across the range of programs which have tried participatory practices or even within those individual programs.

Improved Morale of Learners, Staff, and Others

In programs where learner participation practices have been implemented with success, the level of interest in those practices and in the program in general has often increased among learners, practitioners, and others associated with the program. This is the result when learners see that the program is trying to treat them with respect, as fullfledged adults who can give as well as receive. The learners tend as a result to have more-positive feelings toward themselves and the program. Staff, board members, and funders likewise are encouraged by the enthusiasm which these learners display in learner participation activities, as they see that enthusiasm as a sign that the program has produced tangible, good results for the learners.[43]

Improved Academic Skills for Learners

Many programs using participatory practices appear to see them primarily as a means for dealing with the affective needs of students. They thus haven't looked closely at the effect of those practices on learners' cognitive skills. However, some programs[44] have assessed the cognitive effects of participatory activities and can point to significant gains in the reading and writing skills of learners. The data on these effects are in most cases sketchy, however. This is primarily because the data available are not presented in a way which would allow comparisons of the learners' skills levels with either the levels with which they entered the program or with control groups of other learners not involved in the same participatory instructional formats. However, those who have observed such gains in learners attribute them to the increases in motivation and self-esteem which a supportive, participatory program context provides.

Improved Non-Academic Skills for Learners

In addition to the more purely academic skills of reading and writing, learners have developed various other useful skills through their involvement in participatory activities. This is especially true for those learners who perform clerical duties for programs, as many feel that such on-the-job experience prepares them for jobs outside the program setting.[48] Students also have shown improved planning and organizational skills as a result of their participation in student support and advisory groups and in organizing of social activities. All of these skills are seen as useful to learners in their involvement outside the program in occupational, family, and community activities.

Increased Learner Interest in "Lifelong Learning"

As a result of experiencing the above improvements in morale and academic and other skills, learners involved in participatory activities are often seen to increase their interest in education, for themselves and for their families and others. Those learners who "stick with it" long enough to gain the above kinds of positive rewards in some cases emerge with an increased interest in furthering their formal education. This interest is often reflected in improved attendance rates for those students and in their taking of new courses within or outside the program. These learners also often more fully understand how education can help their children and other family members and friends. They thus encourage those others to likewise value education and to participate in relevant educational activities. In some cases, enthusiastic learners agree to participate in public awareness activities because they want to "spread the word" about the value of education.

Increased "Community-Mindedness"

A benefit commonly cited[48] for those learners involved in participatory activities is that of an increase in "community-mindedness" toward others both within and outside the program. These learners are seen as having overcome the alienation which affects so many in the society and which in particular affects so many adult non-readers. As such they are seen as having developed emotional bonds to others in the program, including both fellow learners and staff members. These learners tend to develop not only emotional attachments but social and organizational skills needed to carry out group activities. Program participants thus function as a "community" for the learner. This community orientation in turn is then carried outside the program by some learners, to take the form of an increased interest in socializing with community members and cooperating with institutions with which the learners come into contact, such as parent-teacher associations, neighborhood groups, and church organizations. As one practitioner analyzed this process:[47] "Language becomes the tool to overcome the problems the learners are facing. The group becomes a problem-solving mechanism, with staff members serving as helpers in this process."

Increased Political Awareness and Activism

When learner participation activities put learners in new roles within programs, the traditional hierarchical power relationships among learners and staff members are brought into question. In the process, both learners and staff members are forced to think about power issues: Who has power in the program? Who doesn't? How did this system come into being? Do learners have to always rely on "others" to provide leadership and resources?

In some cases, these sensitive issues are avoided; in some cases they are dealt with directly, through open, rational discussion. In either case, participatory activities provide an opportunity through which those involved in programs can not only deepen their understanding of the internal politics of their literacy programs but of the larger socio-political context, as well. It appears, however, that to date the tendency in most programs has been to avoid the politically sensitive implications of learner participation. This avoidance of internal political questions is in part because program staff people appear to have not thought through the full implications of sharing power with students. In some cases, staff might avoid the issue because they feel they don't have the resources needed to provide learners with meaningful, more powerful roles within the program.

In a few cases, learners have begun to build upon their new awareness of their potential strength, by organizing themselves around certain common objectives. In some of these situations, learners make polite requests to program staff for additional reading materials and other simple items. In some of these instances, learners' requests are aimed at external sources like funders and public policy makers. A number of public officials have to date responded to those learner appeals in at least a superficial way through, for example, awards ceremonies. Some observers[48] see this as the possible beginning of a larger movement of adult literacy students. Such a movement might take the form of a consumer-advocacy effort (like tenants' rights groups), a social-justice effort (like the civil rights movement), or a victim-advocacy movement (like Mothers Against Drunk Driving or the Vietnam veterans who feel they are victims of Agent Orange).

Increased Opportunities for Staff Development

Some programs[49] which take a participatory approach report that staff members themselves experience significant rewards from their own participation in the program. In some cases, new staff members (both paid and volunteer) entered programs with fairly "traditional" views about the proper relationship between teacher and student. Those traditional views, however, were challenged by the staff person's subsequent experience in a participatory setting. Some staff people are reported to have undergone a "catharsis," making a major change from those traditional views to a more participatory perspective.

This of course has not always been the case,[50] and many traditionally-minded staff people elect to leave participatory programs rather than adapt themselves to a style with which they are not comfortable. Overall, however, participatory programs could be seen as a learning environment not only for students but for practitioners who have an active interest in -- or at least a willingness to try -- the alternative learning or management styles which the programs represent.

Improvements in Program Management

In addition to their positive impact on staff development, learner participation activities have also enhanced other categories of the management activities described in earlier chapters. Programs encouraging learner participation in student recruitment, public awareness, fundraising, and social activities in particular commonly report that students have been vital to the success of those management-related operations. Many[51] of these programs are now "total converts" to these forms of learner participation, saying in effect that they wouldn't consider implementing these particular management functions without significant learner involvement in the planning and implementation of the activities.

Positive Support from Funding Sources

In response to the kinds of positive outcomes cited above, funding sources are paying more attention to programs which use learner participation practices. In 1986, for example, the MacArthur Foundation announced that it would give $750,000 to the Association for Community Based Education for development of the kinds of community based literacy programs within which participatory practices are frequently found. As described in Chapter III, author Sidney Sheldon and Lutheran Church Women made a substantial grant to Literacy Volunteers of America for support of special "student involvement" projects in thirteen LVA affiliates nationally. The federal VISTA program has also provided funding to some program students to enable them to serve as staff members in the program.[52] Some state ABE programs have targeted programs with special funds, such as 310 minigrants, for the development of learner participation activities. All of these forms of targeted funding are of course vital for the development of participatory practices, as is discussed under "Resources Needed" in the following chapter.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review, national survey, and case studies presented in earlier chapters have produced information from which estimates can be made of the origins, limitations, and strengths of learner participation practices used in U.S. adult literacy programs. These identified origins, limitations, and strengths are outlined below:

Origins:

Theoretical models

Program models

Institutional influences

Practical experience

Limitations:

Opportunity costs

Loss of confidentiality

Perceived manipulation of learners

Perceived threats to traditional power structures

Difficulties in assessing results

Disappointment resulting from unmet expectations

Limited technical quality of learners' work

Adulteration of learner participation theory

Confusion over purposes and means of learner participation

Strengths:

Improved morale of learners, staff, and others

Improved academic skills for learners

Improved non-academic skills for learners

Increased learner interest in "lifelong learning"

Increased "community-mindedness"

Increased political awareness and activism

Increased opportunities for staff development

Improvements in program management

Positive support from funding sources.

These origins, limitations, and strengths were identified by a selected group of practitioners and learners who, for the most part, have already demonstrated a commitment to participatory practices. As such, they do not represent the final word on these practices. They do, however, provide criteria which interested parties can use to analyze participatory practices in more depth.

ENDNOTES

1. Approximately 90 percent of the practitioners interviewed cited Freire as a direct or indirect influence on their work.

2. A practitioner with experience leading a Freirian-style program for low-income minority groups in a major city.

3. By a practitioner using computer-assisted instruction to foster learners' "critical thinking" skills.

4. Lutheran Church Women was cited as a direct or indirect influence by virtually all of the volunteer program representatives interviewed.

5. E.g., California, Minnesota, and others.

6. New Hampshire.

7. By a national-level specialist in minority language programs.

8. By a national-level specialist in correctional education.

9. A representative of a state ABE program.

10. E.g., a social change advocate and a practitioner experienced in working with religious groups nationally.

11. A literacy student whose childhood education had been hampered by a neurological difficulty.

12. A representative of a volunteer program.

13. As described by a representative of a library-based volunteer program.

14. E.g., representatives of an urban community based organization, a state ABE system, and national volunteer programs.

15. As described by a representative of a minority language program.

16. As described by a director of a community based organization in an eastern city.

17. E.g., an east coast minority language program.

18. As identified by representatives of an east coast community based program, a union program, an ABE program, and more than half of all the practitioners interviewed.

19. One Laubach program staff member responded to a questionnaire which asked whether her program was using learner participation activities, as follows: "Honey, with no money and only one person to run things, only the most basic and necessary things get done." (Source: Findings of the Literacy Council Survey conducted on behalf of literacy student activity, for presentation at the Laubach Literacy Northeast Regional Conference, June 1987).

20. Virtually all learners interviewed cited fear of "being revealed" as an obstacle to their getting involved in public awareness and other participatory activities.

21. As described by a representative of an urban volunteer program.

22. As described by a student and a staff member in a volunteer program in an eastern city.

23. As described by a learner in a volunteer program.

24. As described by a national-level specialist on correctional education.

25. As described by a student in a volunteer program.

26. As described by a practitioner in a midwest volunteer program and a student in an eastern volunteer program.

27. As described by a practitioner in a volunteer program.

28. As described by a practitioner in a minority language program.

29. As described by a representative of a national volunteer program.

30. Arlene Fingeret,"Research Within Reach: Literacy and Helping Networks," World Education Reports 1 (Spring 1987): 4-5; Also: Arlene Fingeret, presentation at Literacy Assistance Center, New York City, 13 February 1987.

31. As described by a national-level specialist on correctional education.

32. As described by a representative of an ABE program.

33. Described by a student in an east coast program.

34. A representative of an east coast community based program.

35. As defined by a practitioner in an east coast volunteer program.

36. As identified by a student in an east coast volunteer program.

37. As identified by a practitioner in an east coast volunteer program.

38. As identified by a practitioner in a community based program.

39. As described by a student in an east coast volunteer program.

40. As identified by practitioners in a state where learner-centered curriculum is the policy of the state ABE program.

41. In such a situation, in Paulo Freire's words, the practitioner must "keep one foot inside the system and the other foot outside. . . . This is an ambiguity from which no one can escape, an ambiguity that is part of our existence as political beings." See Paulo Freire, The Politics of Education (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 178.

42. As identified by a practitioner in an urban community based program.

43. As identified by a representative of an east coast community based program.

44. As identified by an east coast program which conducts controlled studies of various groups of program learners using a computerized testing system.

45. As identified by a practitioner who has trained learners to do clerical work in their minority language program.

46. As identified by a practitioner in an east coast minority language program.

47. A practitioner in a midwest volunteer program.

48. E.g., three representatives of volunteer programs, and a student and practitioner in an east coast community based organization.

49. E.g., a director of a local-level ABE program.

50. As identified by a practitioner in an east coast volunteer program which gives volunteers the option of working in relatively more participatory groups or in more traditional one-to-one tutorials.

51. E.g., the director of a national volunteer literacy organization.

52. As described in the Literacy Volunteers of New York City and Center for Literacy case studies in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE:
A SYNTHESIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIELD

This study has aimed, ultimately, at identifying a set of issues which are central to further development of learner participation practices. This final chapter attempts to do just that. It ties together recommendations from the wide variety of sources -- primarily the informants interviewed for the national survey and case studies -- with the author's own experience and thinking. The resulting recommendations are presented below for consideration by those interested in developing a participatory approach to literacy education:

Develop a New Theory of Learner Participation

Relatively few practitioners, or learners or others for that matter, involved in learner participation activities appear to be aware of the range of thought and experience developed to date in support of the principle of learner participation. Many practitioners are unaware that supporting theories[1] even exist and have instead gotten involved only by following the examples of other practitioners that they have come across at conferences or of students that they have seen on television.

With so limited an awareness of the broader range of supporting thought and experience and a general de-emphasis on and lack of opportunity for serious study of the theory and practice developed to date, few practitioners have developed their own theory of learner participation. That is, they seem not to have considered the purposes and implications of participatory activities and instead operate on what one observer[2] calls a "makeshift theory." Practitioners according to this view try to tie together various threads of the theory and experience to which they have been exposed, while balancing external constraints with an internal lack of awareness.

The minority of practitioners interviewed who did call for greater attention to theory were for the most part the practitioners who themselves displayed greater awareness of at least one of the arguments for learner participation identified in Chapter II. It appears that these practitioners had done enough study of theory on the subject of learner participation for them to recognize a value in having some kind of theoretical basis for their work.

Those who were most vocal in calling for other practitioners to develop a theoretical basis for their work tended to be advocates of the social change perspective described in Chapter II. These observers argued that it is not enough for a participatory education advocate to have a superficial familiarity with Paulo Freire. As one observer[3] put it, many adult educators are turning to Freire because they have seen that traditional approaches aren't working. They see that those traditional ways of doing things don't get at the root causes of illiteracy. But too many of these participatory education supporters "start with Chapter Three of Freire," not taking the time to understand Freire or other theorists in real depth. These "social change" supporters end up "doing the Freire dance" without having developed their own theory of what participatory education is about. They try to apply "a Freirian approach" in a mechanistic way. This emphasis on technical solutions is seen as symptomatic of U.S. culture, which has a fixation on easy technologies and solutions and which, in the sense of "literacy" defined by Freire,[4] is barely literate at all.

What is instead needed, according to another social change advocate,[5] is a vision of the role of education in U.S. society. Education should be seen as a force for changing individual lives and the greater society. Practitioners, learners, and others must answer for themselves "Why is education needed?" An alternative view of education must be developed, one which is based on a more holistic, coherent vision without contradictions, of how the world does and should work. Literacy education cannot be implemented in isolation from the rest of society and from learners' lives.

The process of developing a theory of this type should not, according to one informant,* be seen as the property solely of "radicals" and university professors. When a social change perspective is isolated in such groups, it is kept out of the hands of a broader cross section of the practitioners, learners, and others who make up the literacy field. As a perspective, it is thereby weakened and kept in the realm of theory and out of common practice.

A related way of isolating the social change perspective is to allow it to become petrified in dogma, myth, rhetoric, and jargon. Social change advocates' point out that "community-based," "critical thinking," and "empowerment" are terms used by radicals to mean one thing and by others to mean other things entirely. In many cases, claims are made around these terms which are not substantiated and in fact obscure what is going on in programs as much as help the field to understand what is being done.

What form a social change theory of learner participation would actually take is not so clear. Commonly-cited elements of a social change perspective are those of mutual respect, dialogue, and partnership between the learner and practitioner; and a focus on raising social consciousness. Such a theory would recognize the different levels of learner participation which can occur. These levels can range from superficial manipulation of learners to a more-in-depth sharing of power among those involved in the program. Learner participation would not be seen as "the answer" to the literacy problem, but as just one of many solutions needed within and outside literacy program settings. It should be understood that learner participation practices can be effective only under the right conditions, when, for example, learners and staff feel the need for such practices and have an understanding of the technical aspects of making them work.

For some,* such a vision of literacy education is in keeping with a larger spiritual uplifting which society needs at this time. Social change advocates need to go beyond merely "coping" with the cynicism and other constraints imposed by an undemocratic and unjust society. Advocates should take inspiration from the adult learners who struggle to renew themselves through participating in educational programs. These learner efforts have a miraculous quality to them, as the learner seeks to confirm his or her full humanity by saying "I am somebody!" Whatever hope there will be for the success of a social change effort will depend on how much advocates can be both optimistic and critical over the long run.

Development of such a theory will depend on social change supporters having a certain political sophistication, as well. Advocates must learn how to cooperate with each other, given the constraints that the larger context places on them. Differences of perspective and ego need to be discussed and resolved if possible, or at least set aside, for the sake of a more unified movement. As stated by several social change advocates,[9] this movement should be seen as a clear alternative to the past and a departure toward a better future for not only literacy education but for society as a whole. Social change advocates should see themselves as pioneers in a process for human liberation, a process which will through its example attract other supporters over time. These advocates should also learn to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the PLUS campaign and other coalitions and public forums. These advocates should see those events and groups as contexts in which participation advocates can promote their ideas and practices to others with whom they otherwise would likely have no contact. Yet, while being open to dialogue with traditionally-minded sources, these advocates must at the same time be willing when necessary to take a stand which is not popular with the mainstream, to "stick to their guns."

In addition to the above "social change" arguments, there are of course other perspectives on learner participation, as well. The "efficiency" perspective is helpful in explaining learning as a process of developing a meaningful relationship between subject matter and learners' lives. The "personal development" argument focuses on the humanity of the individual; in the words of one informant,[10] the participant in an adult literacy program is an "adult who has a mind, who thinks, who has feelings, who has opinions. We simply need to tap that in ways that can be effective." These two perspectives must be considered, as well, in the process of developing a more comprehensive theory of learner participation.

Perhaps no unified theory will emerge from this process. Instead, three or more distinct arguments might develop which will support learner participation practices but for different reasons. Even if those attempting to provide more active roles for learners are not in total agreement on the purposes to be served by such efforts, this process might at least produce a clearer "language" of learner participation, so that those interested in the concept can better communicate with each other. Through such a sharing of thought and experience, learner participation advocates will have a better understanding of the range of resources they can learn from and rely on.

Consider the Key Issues Emerging from the Learner Participation Experience to Date

Confidentiality

As stated under "Limitations" in Chapter V, learners can feel threated by the idea of revealing their basic skills problems to others. Practitioners can in turn avoid implementing participatory activities out of fear of intimidating the learner. However, virtually all who have successfully implemented learner participation practices feel that this confidentiality issue has been blown out of proportion. As one veteran practitioner[11] stated it: "In seventeen years I've met only one student who really wanted to be anonymous. Don't assume that all students want confidentiality. Give them a chance to say yes or no." Another practitioner[12] agreed with this view, saying that overemphasis on confidentiality can "backfire," wrongly communicating the message that learnerss should be "ashamed" of their limited literacy skills.

It was also pointed out that many of the learner participation activities identified in Chapters III and IV can be done confidentially, without revealing the learner's identity. For example, for public awareness purposes students can tell their stories to reporters without revealing their names or other details which would reveal their identities. In any case, this issue of confidentiality is one that is commonly seen as needing to be resolved if learner participation practices are to be widely developed.

Manipulation

Those involved in participatory activities need to beware of the possibility that learners will be (or will feel) manipulated in the participatory practices in which they get involved. Both learners and practitioners see a danger of staff or sponsoring agencies using learners as window-dressing at public events or of giving learners merely a token role in boards of directors and other activities. There is a very real danger that, if learners feel that they are being exploited in these contexts, they will back away from further opportunities for active participation. None of the three perspectives on learner participation would, of course, support this kind of participation. It nonetheless is seen as a danger by many observers of the participatory practices developed by programs to date.[13]

Learner participation advocates must understand this danger and take steps to avoid it. They should, for example, understand Arnstein's analysis of the different levels of participation.[14] They should also understand that practitioners can unconsciously fall into the trap of manipulating learners when they rush into activities without fully discussing the purposes and implications of those activities with the learners in advance. A participatory activity can also degenerate into manipulation if the logistical resources required for smooth operation of the activity are not in place, the activity begins to fall apart, and staff members rush in to "save" the activity while effectively taking control of the activity away from the learner.

In the special case of hiring learners for work within the program, programs have to negotiate equitable pay rates for learners so that they don't feel they are not being paid a fair wage.[15] Learners should also not be given the impression that their active participation in program activities will necessarily lead to jobs or other benefits within or outside the program. If left with that impression and those benefits don't materialize, learners will likely feel cheated.[16]

Programs should also consider the process used in determining which students will participate in various activities.[17] For example, for a public awareness event, staff might feel compelled to select students who will create a good impression on the public, while other students might feel that they have had no say in who represents them in the event. A mechanism should be established -- possibly a student support group or advisory group -- in which such issues can be openly discussed by staff and students.

In fact, such a mechanism might be the best single way for avoiding a sense of exploitation among learners. In such a forum, learners can discuss among themselves and with staff the purposes, costs, benefits, and mechanics of a particular activity. They thereby need not feel coerced into participating, feel that they are being used for staff's political purposes, or feel that they are being patronized. They can define for themselves what their own roles should be.

Leadership

Programs need to realize that learner participation in many ways is a question of developing leadership. Through participatory activities, students have the opportunity to learn how to become leaders. But leadership doesn't automatically happen just because a learner joins a participatory activity. Special technical skills (such as how to speak in public and how to plan and run a meeting) and a change in thinking about oneself and one's role in the world are things which many students will have to learn.

A student can learn some of these traits informally, through observation of others in the program and by trial and error while participating in actual activities. Programs should also consider dealing with these leadership issues more directly, through training sessions for both staff and students. The larger questions of "What does it take to be a good leader?" and "What do I need to learn to be a good leader?" should be considered. More specific technical skills needed for leadership need to be dealt with. Such skills include public speaking, running meetings, and handling conflicts.[18]

Programs[19] using participatory practices have cited problems which have emerged when these leadership issues weren't adequately dealt with. In the case of one "student leader" who suddenly found himself in the limelight both within the program and in media coverage, he reportedly went off on "ego trips" from which he was extricated only through careful guidance from staff members.

Mechanisms for helping students to deal with leadership issues might include personal counseling with staff members and student-to-student discussions in support groups, classroom debates, or other student forums. Programs can also use an "open enrollment" system, in which veteran students are mixed with newcomers.[20] In such an arrangement, the veterans can serve as role models, demonstrating to the newcomers what it takes to take active roles within the program.

For programs which have not had a history of having students in leadership roles, there might be a tendency to wonder "where to start." These programs might be unsure about which students will take the risk of assuming a more active role, and what the results will be. Others who have been through this process and who have faced these questions advise that programs need to start slowly. Inexperienced programs need to offer a variety of participatory activities to learners, and thereby provide opportunities for learners to choose from. As activities get under way, leaders tend to emerge who, in turn, will serve as role models for others. If these experiences can then be evaluated by all involved and then built upon over time, a foundation will be established for development of student leadership.

Support Needs

Learners participating in new roles often feel timid and vulnerable and can benefit from the support which personal counseling and support groups can afford them. As one staff member put it: when participating in public awareness, advocacy, governance, and other activities, learners are taking risks and need more than a pat on the back. In some cases, learners emerge from these activities quite uncertain about "how they did." When no one steps forward to reassure them or give them feedback on their performance, the learners feel abandoned.

For these reasons, counseling, support groups, and other mechanisms are needed to provide the kinds of moral support and technical guidance which learners need. Learners generally need to have a sense of both staff and fellow learners before they will risk taking a visible leadership role. Many learners in fact are likely to need support whether they are engaged in special participatory activities or not. This is due to the fact that many learners come from unsupportive community and family environments and thus have many questions about their own futures and the problems they face in their lives. Some practitioners feel that programs can, through participatory activities, help to provide the sense of "community" which these learners lack. Some programs report that students tend to provide informal help to each other in such forms as finding jobs for each other, or fixing the lock on a fellow student's door after his apartment had been burglarized.[21] In some cases,[22] students have developed a sense of community by working together on an issue out in the surrounding community. The program itself in these ways becomes a kind of community for the learners, a resource of great use to learners who otherwise might not feel themselves to be part of any other group or community.

It is not enough to merely form support structures and to then say that they are to provide moral and technical support to learners, without having a clearer idea of what specifically the structures might actually do. A central focus of support activities might be the development of clear guidelines for staff and learners about the various roles learners might play in the program, as well as the resources they will need to fulfill those roles. Support activities can also provide reassurance to learners about their performance in the program, assuring them, for example, that they are allowed to make mistakes and be less than "perfect," and that they need not rush into something they are not sure of.

Support activities of this kind can have additional benefits, as well, both within and outside the program. Student support groups might be used as a way of helping "one-to-one" programs to make the transition to the small-group instructional format.[23] Student-led support activities can also reinforce the general notion of cooperative self-reliance, an important attitude for students to bring with them to their home communities.

Staff members generally require similar support structures, to help them deal with not only the special demands associated with new learner participation activities, but with the normal stresses of any educational program setting. Staff should be provided with opportunities for individualized counseling, peer-support activities, and mixed groups made up of staff and students. Staff members' salaries also need to be adequate to support their work in the program.[24]

Commitment

Central to the issue of trust within programs is that of "commitment." Not only do all involved in participatory activities need to commit themselves to the process in spirit, but they have to set aside the time and other resources needed for these activities to succeed. Advocates of learner participation point out that the illiteracy problem is not likely to go away soon, as schools are not improving all that much,[25] immigration rates remain high, and new technologies are raising the levels of literacy skills expected of literate citizens. At the same time, demands for literacy services are growing at a rate faster than existing programs can expand available services.[26] The need for the kinds of effective literacy practices which participatory practices represent will thus remain with us for some time. Learner participation as a concept should for this reason not be seen as a fad which programs and support organizations will jump onto this year and then abandon for another theme next year. It is a principle which should permeate the work of interested parties on an ongoing, constant basis.[27]

Some programs have declared that they will integrate learner participation into their work from now on. To accomplish this, funding sources need to be convinced of the value of participatory practices and of the need for special funding to support the development of those activities. Such institutional supports can be important resources for programs which are struggling to not only keep up with their basic requirements but with extra demands which active learner participation places on programs.

Accountability

Those involved with learner participation activities are likely to want to feel some success for their efforts. Assessing the outcomes of participatory practices, however, is not easy, as traditional quantitatively-oriented program measures cannot be easily adapted to most of the participatory activities identified in Chapters III and IV. Programs should thus consider developing systematic measures which are sensitive to the activities' affective and social objectives.

Programs might develop periodic "feedback" activities, such as individual and group interviews, learning logs, and questionnaires.[28] These activities would aim at eliciting qualitative information from participants about their experience with the participatory practices. Learners should be given opportunities to provide confidential feedback about the program as well, since many learners might feel it rude to criticize their programs in too open a way. These qualitative assessments might be combined with the gathering of more quantitative data about such tangible things as attendance rates at student-run events, amount of funds raised by learners, and the amount of time in an activity in which the learners do the talking as measured against the amount of time in which the learners are doing the talking. Programs need,[29] however, to beware of scaring off timid students with too much evaluation, especially in the students' initial time in the program. These students might associate evaluation with the tests with which they were judged during their less-than-positive years in the formal school system.

Because the amount and types of participatory practices will vary from program to program, it will be difficult to assess the quantitity and quality of these practices across large systems. Some crude measures can be developed, however, to clarify how many programs are using learner participation in some form or another. Funding sources should be supportive of effective participatory activities while realizing the difficulty of assessing them. They should, for example, look at how well programs get at the full range of learners' identified goals and not look only at reading and writing test scores. (Most participatory programs see standard reading tests to be of limited relevance to their programs.[30]) Funders also must honestly ask the question of how accountable any U.S. education system is at present. That is, why should underfunded adult literacy programs be held accountable for their performance at a time when most formal school systems are not?[31]

Whatever assessment is done of learner participation activities should be aimed not only at pleasing funders, but at clarifying for learners and staff what the outcomes of the activities have been and what needs to be done to improve those activities. This kind of formative evaluation can provide all concerned with clearer guidelines about what they can reasonably hope to accomplish, specific roles and standards of performance, and reasonable time frames within which activities will be carried out. Students and staff might formalize these guidelines by negotiating periodic "learning contracts" in which learners' goals and schedules are put into writing and eventually evaluated.[32] These guidelines are particularly important for the innovative, unfamiliar kinds of practices which learner participation activities represent and with which few practitioners and learners are familiar. By demonstrating that learners are listened to and responded to, programs can reinforce a trusting atmosphere within the program, reduce dropping out by students who feel that the program is not responsive to them, and actually improve program effectiveness.

Power Relationships

Programs need to realize that, if learner participation activities are intended as a way of "empowering" learners, then those learners might very well choose to exercise their new power in unexpected ways within and outside the program. In more than one program, learners have as a result of a participatory activity chosen to say things in public or demand things from the program which were not to the program staff's liking. Staff in such situations are likely to ask themselves whether they have opened a Pandora's box by encouraging learners to take more active roles. Staff in one program were told by one frustrated student: "You gave us the tools, but now you don't want us to use them."[33]

The current reality in most programs is that decision-making power remains almost exclusively in the hands of staff persons.[34] The participatory activities developed to date generally don't allow learners much power to decide how the program is run. Instead, there has until now been an emphasis on students giving testimonials and organizing social events rather than providing opportunities for students to have a real say in how the program is run. Staff can rationalize this situation by saying that they have legal responsibility for what happens in the program and have the technical background and long-term professional commitment needed to make major decisions in the program. Learners, according to this view, lack most or all of those traits and are, like it or not, not as well suited to making major management decisions.

Many staff members come from traditional educational, professional, and cultural backgrounds and resist the notion that students can advise them on what should happen in the program. These staff, in effect, don't want to give up the control which they have traditionally had over program activities. These factors are sources of some of the resistance which staff can feel when learners begin to make demands on the program and otherwise take on roles historically kept in staff members' hands.

Learner participation can also help alter the learners' relationship to the larger world. To date, learners' appeals to literacy funding sources have been the most visible show of student power outside the program. This mild pressure has been met with polite acceptance by some funders. There has been no obvious increase in funding as a direct result of student appeals, nor apparently have any funders resisted funding a program as a reaction against student pressure. If funders in fact state in their guidelines that they want to foster community control, they should then look seriously at literacy programs which try to develop community leadership skills through learner participation activities.[35]

Overall, the U.S. literacy field is still controlled by practitioners, policy-makers, and funders, and not by the adult students who make up the majority of people participating in literacy-related activities.[36] Some learner participation advocates in fact claim that the field is dominated by opportunistic bureaucrats and politicians, pompous professors, and apolitical types who manipulate the field for their own selfish purposes.[37] Despite these obstacles, however, many in the field[38] are beginning to recognize the potential power of students to "shake things up," getting bureaucracies and other power sources to respond to student needs. Some observers[39] wonder whether students will form power blocs and become more militant as they realize that the system has let them down.

Programs which are serious about developing student power need to do something about it both internally and externally. Internally, programs need to break down traditional staff/student hierarchies through, for example, establishing a common membership status within the program for both staff and students. Programs can also establish mechanisms, like support groups, in which these internal power issues are discussed directly. With such mechanisms, "identity crises" and conflicts might be prevented. Staff can show their willingness to share power with students through such visible and simple mechanisms as sharing student names and phone numbers, so that students can better communicate with each other.[40] Externally, programs can help learners to organize themselves for action around issues of concern to them.

Another power relationsip which participatory practices call into question is that between participatory programs and the rest of the literacy field. To date, participatory programs have generally worked in isolation from the field and from each other. This is evidenced when well-known participation advocates cannot name other programs which they feel confident are actually implementing participatory activities in a significant way. These participatory programs need to organize themselves for more recognition and funding from policy makers who have little or no sense of the needs and power of adult learners. As one observer[41] put it, learner participation advocates will begin to expand their influence within the field when they create a "critical mass" of students and practitioners whose momentum will begin to carry the literacy field along with it.

Advocates must also recognize the possibility that such a power bloc will be seen as a threat by funding sources. Learner participation should thus be portrayed in as positive a light as possible (for example, as a means of "checks and balances" in the tradition of the U.S. Constitution), so that needed support is not unnecessarily scared away.

Be Prepared to Deal with External Constraints

Those who favor a participatory approach to literacy education are up against a range of political, cultural, bureaucratic, and economic constraints, often without even knowing they are there. Taking these constraints one by one:

Political Constraints

Despite the democratic principles upon which the nation was founded, the United States does not afford most people with a great deal of opportunity to participate in decision-making in the workplace, in social services, and in other major institutions which most adults encounter regularly. Many adult learners growing up in that context have never developed participatory decision-making skills, and instead live lives which are removed from the notion that they could in any way control the kind of institution which an adult education program represents.[42]

This society as a whole, and hence literacy programs, are largely controlled by decision makers who have to this point not shown an apparent interest in sharing power with the kinds of people which adult literacy students represent.[43] It is not clear how these decision makers would respond to a movement which promotes the notion of 27 million or more undereducated adults participating in decision-making in their communities nationwide.

Cultural Constraints

The subcultures from which non-reading adults come are subject to institutional mechanisms which discourage the notion of learner participation. These mechanisms include school, media, criminal justice, welfare, social service, and medical care institutions which reinforce a sense of passivity, resentment, and hopelessness among participants.[44] Low-income (and particularly minority) groups are sometimes seen by learner participation advocates as having histories of submission to the kinds of external authorities which literacy programs can represent. Learners from those groups thus often bring with them the notion that they should "cooperate" with the will of program staff people rather than participate as equal partners.

The dominant culture in turn is seen[45] as reinforcing passivity in its members through the spreading of cynicism among its members. Cynics assume that no one can do anything that is genuinely good, and that in fact most people do things for selfish motives. This attitude is reinforced by news reports of corrupt public officials and selfish celebrities. Learners and practitioners entering a literacy program with such an attitude are therefore liable to be suspicious of the intentions of other staff members and learners who propose a more positive alternative.

Bureaucratic Constraints

Staff themselves bring with them the residue of years of personal and work experience in formal education systems which are, with few exceptions, not participatory in nature.[46] It is only natural, then, that they would expect learners to conform to the formal model of education. Even when they consciously reject that model and try to implement a more participatory learning and management style, they are frequently faced with pressures from traditionally-minded institutions to conform to standards designed for traditional programs. Many participation-minded practitioners end up disguising what they are doing, because they assume that funding sources would not be pleased.[47]

As the adult literacy field places more demands on funding sources for financial help, it is likely that those funders will demand more accountability from adult educators. Programs might be pressured to move toward the educational mainstream which is not particularly familiar with or supportive of the notion that students themselves should share in the control of the program.

In Connecticut, for example, a competency-based approach has now been mandated for adult basic education programs; this is an approach with limited room for learner participation.[48] Advocates of non-participatory approaches to reading instruction have already lobbied the U.S. Congress to have their preferred approaches cited in the Congressional Record as the most effective approach to reading instruction.[49] Several states have prevented non-school-based adult education programs from receiving federal and state ABE funds; such legal restrictions are supported by educational bureacracies which don't want community-based organizations competing with them for funding; it is those CBOs which have historically been the leaders in developing learner participation practices.[50]

Programs need to be aware of these pressures and learn how to continue to implement alternative practices in whatever settings are available to them. While the classic "CBO" might be the most supportive context for learner participation practices, there are few of those around at this point. At the same time, supporters of learner participation practices should legitimize their efforts so that they are supported by rather than threatened by funding sources.[51] As one means of so doing, they should collaborate to develop the "participatory" cross-section of programs and reduce the isolation and outright competition which have until now too often characterized relations among programs with an interest in deeper learner participation.

Adult learners themselves have often incorporated the worst attitudes and habits from their school days and bring those with them when they enter literacy programs. Participation-minded practitioners thus have to deal with students who insist that "education" consists of filling in blanks in workbooks and who are fairly convinced that staff members are authorities to be either submitted to and/or resented and resisted.[52]

Economic Constraints

Both students and staff supportive of the learner participation idea are faced by difficult economic choices. Students frequently need to drop out of literacy programs for financial reasons, such as having to take a new job when the opportunity arises. Staff likewise are faced with similar decisions, since few adult literacy instructors in the United States are presently paid a salary adequate for the support of a family.

Those supportive of learner participation should realize that the above contextual constraints are key determinants of many of the "Limitations" cited in Chapter V and of many of the issues discussed in this chapter. With such an understanding, learner participation advocates can better understand that the lack of support being given to participatory practices is the result of a number of factors and not necessarily due only to oppressive funding sources. With a broader understanding of these contextual factors, practitioners and learners might more clearly see their own biases and destructive attitudes. Special training activities might be developed to allow both practitioners and learners to more fully understand the effects which these contextual pressures have on efforts to promote fuller learner participation.

Institute an Ongoing Research and Development System

As stated above (under "Develop a New Theory of Learner Participation"), many "social change" practitioners argue that supporters of learner participation need to develop their own theories which would serve as a basis for their work. This theory-development would be carried out through study of the kinds of learner participation theory and practice which have been the focus of this study.

Other practitioners searching for effective participatory practices are less concerned with developing theoretical understanding of learner participation than they are with development of practical models which other practitioners can in turn learn from and adapt to their programs. In such a case, information is required about the practices described in Chapters III and IV.

Some observers[53] see documentation of learner participation practices as an important way of convincing funding sources of the validity of the participatory approach.

Given these varied interests in research and documentation of learner participation efforts, the following activities should be considered as a learner participation research and development agenda:

Clarify Research and Development Needs

All concerned with participatory practices should be encouraged to identify what they feel to be the areas of learner participation education that they need help with. This information could be gathered across the field via conferences and meetings, interviews and questionnaires, as well as within individual programs via meetings of learners and staff. Learners themselves should have a major say in defining which forms of learner participation practices they are most interested in. For example, "how to run a student support group" might be of more interest to learners than "how to raise funds for the program." Research and development activities might then focus their attention on those priority areas, reserving other practices for consideration at a later time.

Document Existing Theory and Practice

Those interested in the notion of participatory literacy education should recognize that learner participation practices have been around a long time. These practices have been interwoven into the work of outstanding practitioners who perhaps developed the practices by intuition and carried out their work unrecognized for what they were doing that was so effective.[54] This work has to a large degree not been widely documented, analyzed, or disseminated. One of the results of this situation is that there has developed a gap between the theory of learner participation practices and the actual work that has been done in the field.

Little work has been done so far to document the full range of existing learner participation theory and practice. To remedy this, an effort should be undertaken at the program level and across the field to document not only the theoretical work which has already been done in support of learner participation, but the corresponding practices which have already been developed, as well. The sources identified in this study would be good places to start this process of ongoing documentation.

This information might be organized according to the kinds of categories of theory and practice identified, respectively, in Chapters II and III of this study. Documentation of theory might take the forms of annotated bibliographies, anthologies of various theoretical works, and more in-depth comparative studies of various theoretical perspectives. Documentation of practices might take the forms of collections of sample materials from individual programs, catalogued descriptions of existing practices organized by type of program or type of practice, and more in-depth case studies and comparative studies of existing practices. This documentation should detail the purposes, technical requirements,[55] and outcomes of those practices.

Disseminate Research Findings

This gathering and documenting of information on participatory theory and practice will require an ongoing effort by participatory education advocates. For it to be of benefit to the field, the documented information must in turn be made available to the field via the kinds of training and networking mechanisms described below.

A publications program should be developed, as well, which would be interwoven with these training and networking efforts. That is, the publications would both contribute to those efforts and glean information from them regarding needs and resources in the field. The publications program would consist of the kinds of documented theory and practice described above. Special emphases would be made on presenting this information in concise, readable, and inexpensive formats which busy practitioners (and, as much as possible, learners) could readily get access to and use.[56] One or more centralized clearinghouses might be developed to handle the preparation and distribution of these documents.[57]

Institute a Training and Networking System

Training and networking activities need to be implemented for practitioners, learners, and others interested in participatory literacy education. These activities would aim not only at developing the theoretical understanding and technical skills of those involved -- and thereby the technical operations of programs -- but at developing a sense of solidarity among existing learner participation supporters. These activities could also serve to considerably expand the number of those supporters. Through these activities, information could be gathered on needs and resources in the field, for further dissemination via training, networking, and publications mechanisms.

This training and networking system could consist of the following set of formal and informal exchanges between parties concerned with the learner participation approach:[58]

1. Ongoing formal and informal training opportunities for staff, learners, and others within individual programs. (This might take the forms of support groups for students and staff members, in which technical and other questions might be discussed);
2. Student and staff exchanges among programs which would have clear

objectives and not consist merely of unfocused "visits";

3. Longer-term "residencies" (internships) for new practitioners in model programs;

4. "Teacher-in-residence" programs in which an experienced teacher works for a period with another program;

5. Formal and informal exchanges among interested parties at all levels;

6. Conferences and symposiums;

7. Targeted training and development, especially for new programs. (This would include not only training sessions but ongoing supervision and consultation by "master" practitioners and students.)

8. Training institutes (perhaps on a regional basis) conducted by network members, for several days at a time, with ongoing exchange and support among members;

9. Longer-term training for practitioners (including learners who have graduated from GED programs) at the community-college and university levels;

10. Referral services (perhaps carried out by the research and development clearinghouse system)

which would enable callers to locate resource people in their geographic area or with an expertise in a certain technical area. (This might include development of a computerized information system similar to, or integrated into, the "LitLine" operated by the U.S. Department of Education and the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy.)

11. Concise, widely-distributed newsletters and other practically-oriented field guides dealing with a wide range of instructional and management issues and prepared by practitioners and learners themselves.

These training and networking activities would be designed to help interested parties to go beyond the rhetoric of learner participation and to better understand the "nuts and bolts" of conducting participatory activities. Similar networking efforts, particularly among CBOs, have to date been limited in part because those involved would not get sufficiently beyond fine-tuning their theoretical arguments and attacking others who didn't share those arguments.[59] These training and networking efforts should build on the experience, expertise, and resoures[60] of organizations like the Highlander Center which have had success in building alternative organizations.[61] Those involved should also learn a lesson from the experience of others who have tried to build literacy coalitions in recent years: While practitioners might be good at running their own programs, they frequently have to learn a new set of skills to build a coalition of many different organizations.

Special efforts must be made to provide learners themselves with opportunities to lead and participate actively in the above training and networking activities. Learners and staff must carry out careful planning and honest discussion of what is to be done in these activities, so that learners aren't limited to token roles or otherwise prevented from having meaningful participation. Outstanding student leaders who have earned their GED should be given the opportunity to get further paraprofessional- and professional-level training in community college and university settings.[62] Such training and eventual employment opportunities would provide real incentives for learners who have developed leadership skills and are committed to community literacy work.

Such a training and networking system might help to overcome the territorial divisions which now keep participation-oriented practitioners and learners fenced up within their respective segments of the literacy field. At this time, for example, few CBOs appear to know about -- or want to recognize -- the fledgling learner participation efforts going on within the volunteer literacy organizations. At the same time, many volunteer programs are calling themselves "community based" without knowing the considerable work which community based organizations have already done to develop community based approaches.

This network should ultimately aim at strengthening the practice that goes on in individual programs. The network should in this way not be seen as an end in itself. Instead, it should enable programs as teams of learners and staff to more effectively fulfill goals which they have set for themselves, which ultimately is where the strength of the programs and any network would lie.

Be Prepared to Deal with Internal Program Needs

All of the above theory building, research and development, and training and networking activities are ultimately to be aimed at improving local-level programs. Within those programs themselves, a number of steps should be considered by those interested in developing learner participation practices. For example, a program should consider the question of how large it wants to allow itself to become. Some observers[63] feel that there is a definite advantage in remaining small, as a small size can allow a program to retain a certain integrity or clarity of vision which, in turn, can serve as a strong foundation upon which effective practice can be developed.

Individual programs are sometimes puzzled about how to be responsive to all the different needs likely to emerge when the decision-making process is opened up to greater input from students. Such programs might consider developing activities around commonly-identified sets of goals as a means of balancing individual interests with limitations in resources.

Programs should also recognize that some participatory practices are likely to be more easy to implement or more popular than others, depending on learners' and staff's interests and availability of resources. Learners should be made aware of the many types of potential participatory resources, what is required to make them work, and potential costs and benefits. They should then be allowed to choose which practices they might be interested in, based on a consideration of the above factors.

Programs need to approach development of participatory practices in a critical way, not assuming that they will work automatically, according to a prescribed formula. For example, small group instructional formats can help foster more active learner participation in the forms of group discussion and peer-helping. However, this is not necessarily so, as groups need to be set up and conducted properly to produce those results.

Staff members also need to recognize that, particularly in the early stages of the development of participatory activities, staff will to varying degrees have to be directive, working with learners to develop guidelines for activities within which learners can eventually take increasing amounts of control. This need for a balancing of staff member control with learner control is a dilemma which needs to be dealt with openly and critically by all concerned.

Programs have to decide for themselves the relative weight to be given to involving learners in instructional vis-a-vis management activities. It might well be that a program is already committed to a familiar instructional format which does not allow much learner input; in such a case, the program might feel that it should focus its participatory energies on the management side of the program. In another case, a learner might have no time or interest to give to anything that help him reach his instructional goals; the program might thus have to forget about involving him in management practices and instead focus on developing participatory roles for him in the instructional component. Related to this, programs should also define for themselves the relationship between instructional and management practices within the program. That is, are management practices to be seen as of secondary importance or of equal weight vis-a-vis instructional activities?

Practitioners should recognize that it will take time to introduce both staff and students to new participatory practices. However, when learners are encouraged to see education as something more than merely pleasing the teacher -- a means for them to develop their own power as individuals and as a community -- they are likely to respond with interest. There is no guarantee that staff or students will latch onto a participatory approach, or that programs will be able to overcome the obstacles to learner participation identified above. But for there to be any hope of developing participatory practices, opportunities for learner participation must be put into place (perhaps, initially, in the form of a simple student support group) and given a chance to be tried.

Develop a Base of Material and Human Resources

To carry out the above research and development and training and networking activities will of course require considerable resources. Long-term commitment and a cooperative spirit among those involved will be needed. But considerable material resources will also be required, to cover the costs of personnel, materials, communications, and transportation which effective research, training, and networking would entail. In addition to the costs of these new support activities, there remain the ongoing costs faced by individual participatory programs which need to be provided for if these programs will be able to benefit from new support activities. Basic costs faced by individual programs include vital services like daycare, transportation, and counseling for learners, as well as equitable wages and benefits for professional staff and learners working in the programs.[84]

Organizations with a commitment to learner participation must therefore make funding sources aware of the potential and needs of a participatory approach, and integrate learner participation activities into the proposals which they submit to funders. Funders in turn should inform themselves of the fundamental importance of learner participation activities and shift their funding priorities to support those activities. This is particularly true for funders who, in the rhetoric of their funding guidelines, claim to support development of such assets as democratic decision-making and "jobs-not-welfare" as tools for community and individual self-reliance. When being pressured to be sure that public education funds are being spent wisely, legislators should not take the easy way out, act as though they don't know any better, and automatically assume that traditional assessment tools are the only way to measure a program's effectiveness.[85] Funders should develop appropriate means of assessing the effectiveness of the programs they fund. In this way, "traditional" literacy programs will have to prove that they are really providing "education" and not merely training people how to memorize fragments of the reading and writing process. At the same time, funders can also be more sure that the participatory activities they support also in fact effectively serve the real needs of learners and don't merely serve as "window-dressing" for programs looking for a good public image.[88]

Apart from funding institutions, other support organizations should likewise pay more attention to and in turn support learner participation activities. Community colleges, teacher training institutions, and universities should consider how they can help with the research and development and training and networking needs identified above. Media institutions should be aware of learner participation as a concept and provide coverage of participatory efforts, rather than focusing so much attention on traditional practices of limited effectiveness. Educational publishers should likewise inform themselves of learner participation practices and see how they can assist with preparation and dissemination of the theoretical and practically-oriented texts described under "Institute an Ongoing Research and Development System" above. Another source of potential support is the American public as a whole -- and particularly the young educated class called "yuppies" -- which, given the alienating conditions under which so many people find themselves living, might be attracted to an educational movement which effectively gets at fundamental needs for democratic participation and social change."[7]

All of these literacy support organizations, if they are to live up to that designation, should be paying attention to practices which work in the field and should be providing the kinds of real support which are needed. Commitment of learners' and practitioners' spirits is not enough to make effective literacy education happen. Material resources must be committed, as well, and targeted in a well-planned, long-term effort for participatory education.

Another resource which would be helpful but which has not been forthcoming to date is that of the commitment of the leaders of the nation's formal institutions to a literacy movement in which learners themselves participate as full partners. The interest which has been shown to date by leaders in the public and private sectors has been aimed almost entirely at traditional programs which place limited emphasis on active participation of learners as mature adults.

Whether that commitment from "the top" is forthcoming or not, those committed to participatory education will continue their efforts because they have seen what a more efficient, human, and democratic form of education can accomplish.

Summary and Conclusion

The data gathered for the preceding chapters provided rich recommendations about what will need to be done if learner participation practices are to be developed and expanded across the U.S. adult literacy field. When these recommendations are sorted, the following emerge as issues which should be dealt with if learner participation practices are going to be significantly developed:

1. Develop a new theory of learner participation.

2. Consider the key issues emerging from the learner participation experience to date:

    Confidentiality

    Manipulation

    Leadership

    Support needs

    Commitment

    Accountability

    Power relationships

3. Be prepared to deal with external constraints:

    Political constraints

    Cultural constraints

    Bureaucratic constraints

    Economic constraints

4. Institute an ongoing research and development system:

    Clarify research and development needs.

    Document existing theory and practice.

    Disseminate research findings.

5. Institute a training and networking system.

6. Be prepared to deal with internal program needs.

7. Develop a base of material and human resources.

The above recommendations represent a blending of the researcher's personal views with the large number of recommendations provided by the informants interviewed. Where possible, the sources of specific points are identified in endnotes. The researcher found little to disagree with in the recommendations provided by the informants. The researcher came to see his role in this chapter as one of merely organizing the given suggestions into a systematic presentation, one intended to convey the range of ideas being developed in a vitally promising area of education.

ENDNOTES

1. "Theory" is here used not in the specific sense of a scientifically tested and proven hypothesis but rather in the more general sense of a "hypothesis (or interpretation of a phenomenon) assumed for the sake of argument or investigation." (Source: Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 916.)

2. An advocate of a social change approach with experience running a community based program in a west coast city.

3. Ibid.

4. Freire calls for a broader vision of education: ". . . in the practice we propose, learners begin to perceive reality as a totality; whereas in a reactionary practice learner will not develop themselves, nor can they develop a lucid vision of their reality. They will overuse what we call a focalist vision of reality, by which components are seen without integration in the total composition." (Source: Paulo Freire, The Politics of Education (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 14.)

5. An advocate of a social change approach, with extensive experience in community-based and volunteer programs in an industrial city in the midwest.

6. See note #2 above.

7. Ibid. and a representative of a coalition of community based literacy organizations.

8. The social change advocate cited in note #2 above; also see Chapter X of Freire, ibid., pp. 121-142.

9. See notes #2 and 5 above. Also: a practitioner with extensive experience developing a social change approach for remedial education programs at the college level.

10. A representative of a national volunteer literacy organization.

11. Ibid.

12. A representative of a local-level volunteer program.

13. A representative of a major urban literacy effort; also: Ross Kidd and Krishna Kumar, "Co-Opting Freire: A Critical Analysis of Pseudo-Freirean Adult Education," Political and Economic Weekly XVI (3 and 10 January 1981): 27-36.

14. Sherry R. Arnstein, "Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation," in Citizen Participation: Effecting Community Change, ed. Edgar S. Cahn and Barry A. Passett (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 70.

15. As identified by a representative of a community based program in a major east coast city.

16. As identified by representatives of, respectively, a community based program and a volunteer program in two east coast cities.

17. As recommended by a practitioner in a midwest volunteer program and a student in an east coast program.

18. As identified by a volunteer program staff member who has conducted informal training sessions for student leaders.

19. Ibid.

20. As suggested by a practitioner in an east coast community based program.

21. As described by a representative of a midwest volunteer program with a large immigrant population.

22. As identified by a practitioner in a midwest volunteer program.

23. As suggested by a representative of a national volunteer organization.

24. As recommended by a representative of a community based organization in an east coast city.

25. As identified by a representative of a volunteer program in a midwestern industrial city.

26. For example, the national director of Laubach Literacy Action claimed in May 1987 that, during the previous three years, the numbers of Laubach tutors and students had doubled while the funding available to programs had increased by only 10-15 percent. (Source: Meeting of national adult literacy advisory committee assembled by the Gannett Foundation, 12 May 1987, Rosslyn, VA.)

27.As recommended by a representative of a national volunteer organization.

28. As suggested by practitioners in two east coast community based organizations.

29. As recommended by a practitioner in an ABE program.

30. As identified by practitioners in a union program, a volunteer program, and a community based program in an eastern city.

31. As recommended by a representative of an ABE program in a western state.

32. As suggested by practitioners in an east coast community based organization and a volunteer program who have formalized "learning contract" systems for their respective students.

33. As described by an east coast student who went on to work as a staff member in several urban literacy programs.

34. As stated by a student leader in an east coast volunteer program.

35. As recommended by a practitioner in an east coast community based organization.

36. As stated by a student leader in a volunteer program.

37. See note #2 above.

38. Including one informant, a representative of a New England ABE program.

39. Including two informants, who represent two different west coast volunteer programs.

40. As recommended by a student leader in an east coast volunteer program.

41. A representative of a west coast volunteer program.

42. As identified by practitioners with social change perspectives who have worked, respectively, in a community based organization and in a college setting.

43. In an off-the-record conversation in 1984, a high level federal education official told this researcher that some state Adult Basic Education directors were dragging their feet on developing literacy activities because those activities would be provided primarily for black people, a population which, in effect, didn't need any more stirring up than necessary.

44. As identified by the source cited in note #2 above.

45. Ibid.

46. As identified by a representative of an ABE program in the south, and others. Also see Paul J. Ilsley, "Including Educationally Deprived Adults in the Planning of Literacy Programs," in *Involving Adults in the Educational Process*, ed. S. H. Rosenblum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, June 1985), pp. 33-42.

47. Lynn Raymond Curtis, "Perceptions of Community-Oriented Literacy Facilitators on the Ideological Nature of Their Practice: An Exploratory Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, May 1986), pp. 134-141.

48. As identified by a representative of a New England ABE program.

49. Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, "Oversight on Illiteracy in the United States" (Washington, DC: Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, 20 March 1986), pp. 1-18.

50. As identified by a representative of a New England Adult Basic Education program.

51. Paulo Freire has spoken of the need to balance participatory ideals with the constraints placed on a program by a non-participatory context. See Paul Jurmo, *Dialogue Is Not a Chaste Event: Comments by Paulo Freire on Issues in Participatory Research* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, 1985), p. 18.

52. As identified by a social change advocate working in a remedial program in an east coast college.

53. Including two informants with experience in two different social change programs in east coast cities.

54. As identified by a representative of an east coast volunteer program.

55. Such as the need to present student writing in a graphically legible way.

56. As recommended by a busy practitioner in an east coast community based organization.

57. As recommended by a practitioner in an east coast community based organization which has a small publications program of its own.

58. As identified by a representative of a literacy networking agency in a major city.

59. Ibid.

60. Mailing lists, for example.

61. As identified by the informant cited in note #2 above.

62. As recommended by two social change advocates in an east coast city, one a professionally-trained practitioner and one a student leader who has gone on to work in several literacy programs in her city.

63. See note #2 above.

64. As identified by the heads, respectively, of a New York City community-based program and an ABE program in the southwest.

65. As recommended by a practitioner in a volunteer program in a western state.

66. As recommended by a practitioner with experience in minority language programs.

67. As one informant put it: "The only people really happy in America are those on beer commercials."

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY USED FOR LITERATURE REVIEW (CHAPTER II)

As described in Chapter I (under "Research Methods") and in the opening statement of Chapter II, the literature review presented in Chapter II presents three categories of thinking on the notion of learner participation practices in adult literacy program settings. That is, Chapter II has attempted to identify the various kinds of arguments for why it is important to have learners actively involved in the instructional and management processes conducted by literacy programs.

The Chapter breaks this range of thinking into three categories of purposes which might be served by active learner participation: "efficiency," "personal development," and "social change." The latter two sets of rationales are borrowed from several writers who have developed similar categories of thinking about the role of education in society. Paulston, for example, in his "Multiple Approaches to the Evaluation of Educational Reform: From Cost-Benefit to Power-Benefit Analysis," distinguishes between "equilibrium/liberal" and "critical/conflict" perspectives on social and educational change. Proponents of the former perspective hold that educational change should take place at a relatively slow pace, through gradual refinement and adjustment of existing institutions. In contrast, according to the "critical/conflict" view, educational change should be interwoven into larger efforts to substantially alter or replace existing social institutions which are seen as inherently unjust.

In "Co-Opting Freire," Kidd and Kumar likewise differentiate between the type of "critical" approach to educational change espoused by Paulo Freire and the approach taken by non-politicized "humanists" who avoid directly confronting the oppressive socio-political-economic structures within which poor people live.

In Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions, Fingeret similarly distinguishes between what she terms "individually-oriented" literacy efforts and "community-oriented" programs. The former generally focus on the mechanical side of the reading and writing process, with the assumption that an improving of the individual's reading and writing skills will lead to an overall improvement in the learner's life. In contrast, the latter, community-oriented programs emphasize group analysis of issues facing group members. The goal of these latter programs is to not only teach the "mechanics" of reading and writing within the context of analyzing those problems, but to enable group members to go on to tackle those problems directly through individual and group action.

From such thinking on the purposes of education, the researcher developed his own categories of "personal development" and "social change" perspectives on the purposes of literacy education. He felt that these two categories comfortably held much of the thinking that he had already come across on the importance of active learner participation. However, upon further consideration, it became evident that neither category would legitimately contain another bloc of thinkers. This third group consisted of writers who see learner participation as important but not for the reasons cited by the "personal development" and "social change" advocates. These theorists from the realms of reading instruction and management argue for participatory roles for program clients primarily on grounds of technical efficiency. That is, active client participation leads to greater levels of interest in -- and commitment to -- the tasks at hand.

From this observation emerged a third category which the researcher eventually termed the "efficiency" purpose. Upon further review of adult literacy literature, it later became apparent that other analysts had identified a similar category of thought on the subject of approaches to literacy education. Ilsley, for example, talks in Adult Literacy Volunteers: Issues and Ideas about a "technicist" approach, which is characterized by "an overreliance on tools, technical definitions, and statistical explanations." Such an overemphasis on program efficiency "supplants human considerations" and does not allow "a democratic setting" for the program.

With these three purposes as a framework, the next task was to identify specific supporters of active learner participation and to fit them into that framework. The researcher's two years (1980-82) of graduate courses at the University of Massachusetts had already provided a substantial number of sources to consider. Those sources had been gathered in three programs at the University: those in the Reading Program (which exposed the researcher to the psycholinguistic perspective on reading and writing instruction); those in the Center for International Education (which provided access to the works of nonformal education theorists and programs around the world); and those in the Labor Studies program (which exposed the researcher to participatory-management theories and programs around the world). He reviewed the sources gathered from those particular courses and determined whether and how they might fit into the three perspectives.

With that as a substantial start in the identification of sources, a computer search was made for additional sources. An ERIC search was conducted in April of 1986 for sources within the ERIC system associated with variations on the following key concepts: student/learner participation/involvement in adult-literacy/nonformal education. From this search, abstracts of nearly 200 documents were obtained and reviewed in two phases. In the first phase, materials were weeded out which had limited relevance to the topic at hand. For example, texts were eliminated which focused on quantitative analyses of participation rates in college programs. The remaining texts were in turn compared to the initial core of texts from the graduate courses, and the strongest cases for learner participation were retained and fit into their respective perspectives and the weaker ones discarded. Throughout this selection process, a criterion for selection was that of whether a particular reference was a primary source, one which was relatively "original" and distinct in its portrayal of a purpose for active learner participation. Writers of surveys of what others had already said on the topic were, according to this criterion, generally not cited as sources of learner participation thinking; rather, the primary sources which they identified were the sources which were considered for selection as key references.

After the above two sets of references were reviewed, a third set was examined, that of major current works in the adult literacy field. These sources were examined for any indication that they supported learner participation practices. Those that did were then integrated into the three perspectives.

A fourth source of materials was that of bibliographies found in the above materials and in other special annotated bibliographies on the topic of adult literacy. These were examined to identify potentially relevant materials, which in turn were examined and categorized according to the three perspectives.

A fifth and final source for materials for this literature review was that of the literacy personnel interviewed for the national survey (Chapter III) and the case studies (Chapter IV). During those interviews, these informants were asked to identify any sources, including written works, which had influenced their development of participatory practices. Those identified references were likewise compared to the by-now-extensive list of materials and categorized according to the three perspectives.

During this process -- which lasted more than one year -- the three perspectives "held up." That is, they proved to be accurate descriptions of the range of thinking on the notion of active learner participation. It was also clear that the perspectives were most useful as categories of purposes to be served by learner participation rather than of individual theorists or formalized, rigid "schools." During the literature review itself and in the subsequent preparation of the national survey and case studies, it in fact eventually became clear that many practitioners and theorists wander back and forth across the range of rationales, borrowing ideas from two or more of them at one time. It also became clear that many practitioners and theorists had only a vague understanding of the full range of thinking which has already been developed on the notion of learner participation. The work of many of these theorists and practitioners appeared to be restricted by that limited understanding.

APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY USED FOR NATIONAL SURVEY (CHAPTER III)

Chapter III aims at clarifying (1) what types of participatory practices currently exist in the U.S. literacy field, (2) who is using them, and (3) to what extent the practices are being used within the field.

Defining the make-up of the adult literacy field. It was felt that, to identify what types of participatory practices are being used in the U.S. adult literacy field, it would first be necessary to clarify just who the "adult literacy field" is. That is, it was necessary to know who the various parties are who are involved in providing adult literacy education in this country.

Because the largest number of individuals involved in literacy education are the students themselves, it was necessary to clarify just who those students are. Not only were the numbers of students needed, but their identifying characteristics, as well. The numbers of adults currently enrolled in programs was impossible to determine with much accuracy, due to the high attrition rates in many programs and the fact that no reliable attendance figures are available for whole segments of the field, like community based organizations, employee programs, and proprietary programs. Attempts to count numbers of students nationwide are further complicated by the fact that there is often "double-counting" of students, as in the case when a volunteer program operates in collaboration with a correctional education system and both systems list the same students on their reports. However, ballpark estimates for current adult literacy program enrollments were arrived at by compiling the figures available from national level representatives of the various categories of literacy providers.

To clarify the make-up of the second portion of the field -- that of the providers of adult literacy instructional services -- a review was initially carried out of two sources with wide circulation and credibility within the field, Hunter and Harman's Adult Illiteracy in the United States and the newsletters of the Business Council for Effective Literacy. (BCEL is a national clearinghouse of information related to U.S. adult literacy efforts.) From these documents, twelve categories of literacy providers were identified. These categories differed from each other in terms of organizational structure, funding sources, institutional settings, goals, and people served. After these categories were identified, a profile for each category was developed based on information provided in key reports about those respective categories and through interviews with key informants in each segment. (Those interviews are listed in Appendix D.)

The third portion of the literacy field is the range of "support organizations" whose purpose is to provide vital materials and services required to allow literacy providers to do their jobs. A description was developed of the various institutions which provide planning and coordination, funding and in-kind assistance, research, training, and instructional materials for literacy programs. This information on support organizations was needed to provide a complete picture of all the parties involved in the field at present. To initially identify what the categories of support organizations were, information was taken from a variety of general reports on nationwide literacy efforts, particularly David Harman's Turning Illiteracy Around and the BCEL newsletters. Subsequently, further information about the respective categories of support organizations was taken from individual reports from and about those various support efforts.

When tied together, all of this information on the learners, literacy providers, and support organizations was presented under the heading of "The Make-Up of the Adult Literacy Field."

Defining the forms of learner participation practices now in use. With the above description of the field as background, a second, more difficult and unique effort was undertaken.

This was to aim at identifying, in detail, the forms which the various learner participation rationales identified in Chapter II are currently taking in program settings. This process was a time-consuming one, consisting, initially, of an almost two-year review of newsletters, conference presentations, and other sources of information which describe what is going on in programs. (See Appendix C.)

In reviewing these sources, the researcher looked for descriptions of activities which appeared to put learners in relatively more active roles in the planning and implementing of program activities. Clippings were taken from newsletters, project documents were collected from sources who appeared to be implementing participatory practices, and notes were compiled of evidence of such practices. This information was gradually compiled and sorted according to the functions which the various activities appeared to serve, such as public awareness, fundraising, and course planning. These sorted bits of information were stored in large envelopes for later, more-detailed review and analysis.

A second, more-detailed source of information on the types of participatory practices currently in use was the interviews conducted with more than forty key informants from most of the categories of literacy providers. (See Appendix D.) These informants were identified through a combination of the above-described interviews with representatives of the field, the review of newsletters and conference presentations, and word-of-mouth. In the last case, as key sources involved in learner participation were identified, they would be asked not only about their own experiences with learner participation but also to identify other people, including not only practitioners but learners and others, who they knew had an active interest in the notion of learner participation.

These interviews with key learner participation sources were for the most part in-depth and open-ended, aimed at encouraging the informants to identify for themselves the various ways they had implemented the principle of learner participation. (See Appendix E for a sample interview guide used in these interviews.) They were also encouraged to identify what factors influenced them to get involved in these practices, to assess the outcomes of those practices, and to make suggestions to others who might be interested in developing such practices. This group of informants was seen as not being representative of the entire literacy field. Rather, they were seen more specifically as representing the range of experience and thinking of practitioners and, to a lesser extent, learners who are already actively using participatory practices.

The information from these sources was gradually compiled and sorted, and then presented in the second major section of Chapter III under the title of "Forms of Learner

Participation Practices." In this section, examples of the various identified types of practices were presented, as a way of providing as complete a picture as possible of the many forms which the various practices have taken to date.

Defining the extent of use of participatory practices. Chapter III had thus to this point provided a picture of who the field is and what types of learner participation practices have been developed within the field. A third and final section was now prepared which would aim at tying the first two sections together, to clarify more specifically which types of literacy providing organizations are using these practices. Data for this last section of the chapter came largely from the interviews with key informants referred to above. In these interviews, key representatives of the various categories of literacy providing organizations were asked to estimate how commonly participatory practices were being used within the respective categories. In some cases, those representatives provided documents which gave additional evidence which was of help in answering this question. It was found that only a few of the categories of providers could provide much information on this topic. This was due either to the fact that little systematic information of any type is collected about what goes on within those categories of programs, or to the fact that what information is collected isn't particularly sensitive to the notion of learner participation. What information was available for each category of providers was presented in this last section of the chapter, under the heading of "The Extent of Use of Participatory Practices."

APPENDIX C

NEWSLETTERS, CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS, RECORDINGS, AND OTHER SOURCES CITED IN NATIONAL SURVEY (CHAPTER III)

Newsletters:

AWARENESS: Spartanburg AWARE, Inc., P.O. Box 308, Spartanburg, SC 29304.

BCEL Newsletter: The Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1221 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

The Bronx Ed. Monthly Planet: Bronx Educational Services, 965 Longwood Ave., Room 309, Bronx, NY 10459.

CFL Letter: The Center for Literacy, 3723 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. (Previously titled 382-3700 and Center for Literacy Newsletter.)

Colorado Literacy Action Update: Colorado State Library, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203.

EdTech Voice: The EdTech Project, The Door, International Center for Integrative Studies, 45 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011.

Florida Literacy Coalition Bulletin: Florida Literacy Coalition, P.O. Box 532081, Orlando, FL 32853.

GED on TV: Kentucky Educational Television, 2230 Richmond Rd., Suite 213, Lexington, KY 40502.

Green Mountain Eagle: Adult Basic Education Program, Vermont State Department of Education, Montpelier, VT 05602.

Horizons: Governor's Voluntary Action Program, State House, Room 114, Indianapolis, IN 46204

Information Update: Literacy Assistance Center, 15 Dutch St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

The Ladder: Push Literacy Action Now, 1332 G. St., S.E., Washington, D.C., 20003.

Light on Literacy: Memphis Literacy Council, 703 S. Greer, Memphis, TN 38111.

Literacy Advance: Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210.

Literacy Lights: California Literacy, Inc., 339 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel, CA 91776.

Literacy News: Washington Literacy, 107 Cherry St., Suite 205, Seattle, WA 98104.

More...: North Carolina Department of Community Colleges, 114 W. Edenton St., Raleigh, NC 27611.

The Note: Oregon Literacy, Inc., 3840 S.E. Washington St., Portland, OR 97214.

The Opened World: Volunteer Literacy News: The Volunteer Literacy Program, Adult Basic Education, Tennessee Department of Education, 1125 Morningside Ave., Maryville, TN 37801.

Passing the Word: The Illinois Literacy Council, 431 S. Fourth St., Springfield, IL 62756.

Read On...: The Mayor's Commission on Literacy, City Hall Annex, Room 702, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

The Reader: Literacy Volunteers of America, 5795 Widewaters Parkway, Syracuse, NY 13214.

Students Speaking Out: Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210.

TABLET: Tennessee Adult Basic Education Letter, Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools, P.O. Box 867, Clarksville, TN 37040.

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Association for Community Based Education, National Conferences: Washington, D.C., 1984 and 1985; Chicago, 1986.

City University of New York, Student Recognition Ceremony: New York, 1985.

Gannett Foundation, meeting of national adult literacy advisory committee, Rosslyn VA, 12 May 1987.

Laubach Literacy Action, National Conference: Memphis, June 1986.

Lehman College, "Students and Teachers as Partners in Learning: A City-Wide Adult Literacy Conference": Bronx, NY, February 1987.

Literacy Assistance Center, presentation by Arlene Fingeret: New York, NY, 13 February 1987.

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National League of Cities, National Conference: San Antonio, December, 1986.

State Literacy Initiatives, national meeting: Washington, D.C., August 1986.

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR NATIONAL SURVEY
(CHAPTER III)

Adult Basic Education Programs

Cynthia Chorianopoulos Program Specialist Massachusetts Adult Education	3/20/87
Sharon Darling Director Kentucky Division of Adult Ed.	1/9/87
Art Ellison Director New Hampshire Adult Education	3/23/87
Beret Harmon Director Washington State Adult Education	2/19/87
Greg Hart Chairperson Arizona Joint Task Force on Literacy	3/17/87
Jennifer Howard * Staff Member Vermont Adult Education	3/24/87
Brian Kanes * Coordinator Minnesota Adult Basic Education	7/9/87
Peter Pearson Director Minnesota Adult Reading Campaign	3/16/87

Volunteer Programs:

Jo an Boehm * Director Laurens County (SC) Literacy Council	3/22/85

Beverly Campbell Director Spartanburg (SC) AWARE	12/10/86
Lynn Curtis National Staff Laubach Literacy Action	5/30/86
Marty Finsterbusch Student Delaware County (PA) Reading Council	7/7/87
Rudy Fox * Student Sacramento (CA) Library Program	6/30/87
George Hagenauer Director Literacy Volunteers of Chicago (IL)	1/15/87
Sr. Cecilia Linenbrink Director Denver (CO) The Adult Learning Source	5/22/87
Jonathan McKallip Vice President, Field Services Literacy Volunteers of America	7/1/86 and 1/29/87
Nancy Oakley Director Cleveland (OH) Project: LEARN	12/27/86
Philip Rose National Staff Laubach Literacy Action	2/20/87
Gabriele Strohschen Staff Member Literacy Volunteers of Northwest Suburban Cook (IL)	1/7/87
Carole Talan Director, Project Second Chance Contra Costa County (CA) Library	12/19/86
Peter Waite National Director Laubach Literacy Action	1/23/87

Community Based Organizations

Jacqueline Cook Director Literacy Assistance Center (New York City)	2/20/87
Jon Deveaux Director Bronx Educational Services (New York City)	2/5/87 and 3/11/87
Azi Ellowitch Urban Studies Program LaSalle University (Philadelphia)	3/23/87
Michael Fox Director Push Literacy Action Now (Washington,DC)	1/30/87
Tom Heaney Lindeman Center (Chicago,IL)	3/13/87
Michael James Director Project Literacy (San Francisco)	12/30/86
Jane McGovern Director Neighborhood Education Project (Philadelphia)	3/27/87
Patsy Medina and Alice Belenky * Staff Members Bronx Educational Services (New York City)	7/31/86
Guitele Nicoleau National Literacy Staff Association for Community Based Education	1/30/87
David Penberg Director, EdTech Project The Door (New York City)	8/25/86

Colleges and Universities

Ira Shor Professor, English Department State Island Campus City University of New York	1/30/87

Libraries

Al Bennett Literacy Specialist California State Library	1/14/87
Karen Griswold Staff Member Centers for Reading and Writing New York Public Library	1/5/87
Fred Jackson * Staff Member National City (CA) Library Program	6/26/87

Correctional Institutions

Peter Davidowicz Instructor, Education Program Fortune Society (New York City)	8/25/86
Lynne Ornstein Director, Education Program Fortune Society (New York City)	8/11/86
Steve Steurer Director Correctional Education Association	3/3/87

Minority Language Programs:

William Bliss Director Language and Communication Associates (Washington, DC)	2/3/87
Javier Saracho * Former Director Universidad Popular (Chicago, IL)	1985-86
Pat Tirone Staff Member, Education Program Riverside Church (New York City)	7/22/86
Nina Wallerstein Public Health Instructor University of New Mexico	2/2[illegible]87

Employee Programs

Francine Boren 2/26/87
Staff Member
Consortium for Worker Literacy
(New York, NY)

Lloyd David 1/26/87
Director
Continuing Education Institute
(Medford, MA)

Dianne Kangisser 1/7/87
Research Associate
Business Council for Effective Literacy
(New York, NY)

Anne Meisenzahl 7/9/87
Co-Director, Education
Banana Kelly Community Improvement Assn.
(Bronx, NY)

Dorothy Shields * 6/18/87
Education Director
AFL-CIO
(Washington, D.C.)

Rena Soifer 1/23/87
Director, Reading Academy
UAW-Ford/Eastern Michigan University
(Ypsilanti, MI)

Religious Organizations

Martha Lane 7/7/86
Coordinator, Volunteer Reading Aides
Lutheran Church Women
(Philadelphia, PA)

Services for the Disabled

William Langner * 4/15/87
Education Specialist
U.S. Department of Education
(Washington, D.C.)

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* indicates partial interview.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE USED IN NATIONAL SURVEY (CHAPTER III) AND CASE STUDIES (CHAPTER IV)

I. Regarding your own program:

A. "In the classroom"

1. What special activities has your program developed to enable learners to participate more fully in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their instructional activities?

2. What led your program to develop these activities?

3. What have been the outcomes (positive and negative) of these activities?

B. "Extracurriculars"

1. Outside the classroom, what special activities has your program developed to enable learners to participate more fully in:

-- recruitment of learners
-- program governance (boards of directors, student councils)
-- public awareness and advocacy
-- fundraising
-- social activities
-- recognition events
-- recruitment and training of staff
-- conferences
-- clerical and other staff duties
-- other

2. What led your program to develop these activities?

3. What have been the outcomes (positive and negative) of these activities?

II. Regarding the field:

A. What other programs are you aware of that have implemented learner participation activities?

B. What"future" do you see for further development of such activities?

C. What needs to be done to develop these practices nationally?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR CASE STUDIES (CHAPTER IV)

Literacy Volunteers of New York City

Ralph Arrindell VISTA Student Advocate	7/22/86 and 11/11/86
Forrestine Bragg Student	11/11/86
Marilyn Boutwell Associate Director	6/30/86
Greg Leeds Staff, Student Advocacy	7/24/86 and 8/11/86
Ellen Steiner Site Coordinator	8/14/86 and 8/21/86

Center for Literacy

Rose Brandt Staff	11/19/86
Sylvia Jenkins VISTA Student	7/8/86
Haneefah Shabazz VISTA Student	7/8/86
JoAnn Weinberger Director	7/7/86

Union Settlement House

Maria Quiroga Director, Education Program	7/22/86
Pancho Rivera Instructor, Education Program	7/22/86
Sally Yarmolinsky Director, Program Development	7/22/86

3 ESL Students	11/11/86

LaGuardia Community College (Community Language Services)

Mindy Instructor	8/4/86
Klaudia Rivera Director	7/31/86 and 8/4/86
Sandra Instructor	8/4/86
Group interview with 8 students	11/13/86

Lutheran Settlement House

Penny Marcus Instructor	11/19/86
Kathy Reilly Coordinator, ABE and GED	7/7/86
Group interview with 2 students	11/19/86

American Reading Council

Maritza Arrastia Teacher/Coordinator, Mothers Program	6/16/86
Sara Schwabacher Assistant Director	8/5/86
Group interview with 17 students	6/16/86

APPENDIX G

METHODOLOGY USED FOR CASE STUDIES (CHAPTER IV)

Information to be gathered. Chapter III had provided a description of specific participatory practices currently existing in the U.S. literacy field. The study at this point turned to a more in-depth, qualitative exploration of those practices within actual program contexts. Detailed information was to be gathered about the origins, nature, and outcomes of the identified practices, as they occurred in instructional and management components of a variety of types of programs.

Selection of cases. From the previously-described general survey of the national literacy field, about twenty-two programs were identified which were seen as having relatively successfully implemented participatory practices in both the instructional and management components for a period of at least one year. For logistical reasons, the researcher decided to limit the case programs to those within easy commuting distance of his New York City base.

This narrowed the list of candidates to approximately fifteen. These fifteen programs were contacted by the researcher to determine: (1) whether in fact they did qualify as models of participatory practices, and (2) whether they were willing and available to be interviewed during the six-month period (June through November 1986) that the researcher had available for field research.

From those contacts with this "second cut" of potential cases, it was found that in fact most could have qualified as cases but that only about eight would be actually available for an extensive series of interviews during the June through August 1986 period when the initial interviews were to be carried out. (Summer vacation schedules prevented key staff members and a number of students in several programs from being available.)

Initial interviews were conducted with representatives of the eight remaining programs. This led to a further elimination of two on the grounds that they were not as broadly participatory as they had previously appeared. This left six strong model programs which were in fact available. These programs represented a sampling of three key types of literacy programs: two volunteer programs, two minority language programs, and two community based programs for low-income women. Arrangements were at this point (June-July 1986) made with the six programs for data-gathering visits by the researcher.

How data were gathered. For each of the six programs, data were gathered through a combination of interviews, observations of activities in action, and reviews of reports and sample materials. The interviews proved to be the most useful sources of data, as they allowed fairly in-depth discussion of the purposes, mechanics, and outcomes of the various practices in question. For each program a minimum of two staff members and two students were interviewed, in keeping with the principle of triangulated mixing of data sources. Interviews were for the most part arranged on a one-to-one basis with individual informants, for the sake of privacy. However, a few of the student interviews were done with two or more informants at a time. This group-interivew format was agreed upon either because student time schedules did not allow them to be available for one-to-one interviews or because staff felt that students might be intimidated by a one-to-one interview conducted by a stranger.

Staff-member interviews first focused on identifying various influences -- theories, external program models, internal program experiences, and personal experiences of staff members -- which had led the program to institute the participatory practices in the ways they did. These interviews thqn elicited from the staff detailed descriptions of the practices themselves as they were being used for various instructional and management purposes. Not only were the mechanics of the practices described, but their qualitative outcomes were elicited as well, often in the form of anecdotes about the personal effects which the practices had had on the learners and others. The interviews also asked the staff members to assess strong and weak points of the practices, as well as areas which needed future improvement. The interviews concluded by asking staff members to recommend actions which the literacy field might take to strengthen the use of such practices.

In the case of the interviews conducted with students, the students were first asked to describe what they had hoped to accomplish when they entered the program. They then described their experiences in the program, assessing what effects the program had had on them personally. They too were then asked to make suggestions for steps which the program could take to improve the practices in question. As stated above, these student interviews varied from one-to-one interviews to meetings with small groups of students, ranging from two to eight students in a group.

The questions used in the interviews (See Appendix E.) were generally open-ended, aimed at eliciting relatively spontaneous, "unrehearsed" answers from the respondents. The answers provided by staff members tended to be more "complete" in the sense that most of the staff members questioned had put more thought into the planning and implementation of the practices in question. Students on the other hand tended to respond in a less analytical way, for any of several possible reasons. This relatively uncritical attitude could have been due to the fact that many of the students had not been in the program in question (or perhaps in any other adult basic skills program) long enough to understand the purpose and nature of the activities. Or perhaps the learners had never been encouraged to develop the means of analyzing their own experience within their educational program. The learners might also have felt that it would have been disloyal for them to criticize a program which had been good to them. Whatever the reason, the researcher came away from the interviews with a sense that the practitioners, rather than the learners, had provided the richest analysis of the activities being explored. However, the learners' input was nonetheless valuable inasmuch as it confirmed or tempered the analysis provided by the staff.

The data from these interviews were in most cases tape-recorded for later review and summarization by the researcher. In a few cases where informants stated their preference not to be tape-recorded, the interviewer summarized informants' statements in note form. In two cases, informants' English language skills were weak enough that it was agreed that the interviews be conducted in Spanish, through an interpreter selected by the researcher.

For four of the six case studies, data were also gathered through observations of participatory activities in progress. These observations generally confirmed the information already gathered through interviews, although the amount of time available for such observations was limited.

For all of the case studies, various project documents were reviewed, as well. These documents consisted primarily of reports about the program which were prepared either by program staff or by such outside sources as media reporters. Student-produced materials made up the second category of documents. In most cases, these were essays, stories, or poems written for an in-class activity or for a program newsletter. In a few cases, student-prepared materials consisted of letters written to program funders in support of the program.

In the review of these two types of documents, it was found that the reports about the programs were generally supportive of what the program was doing, weighing more toward positive statements about the program than toward any negative criticism. The student writings generally were seen as indicators of the programs' positive results, in that the fact that students were writing on issues of personal importance to them confirmed that, at least for those students, the program had helped them to be able to accomplish that much.

Comments on the data-gathering process. These data-gathering techniques did produce a large amount of rich data about the six programs. Future research might expand on these data through, for example, longitudinal studies of students in a program over time or comparative studies of students in "participatory" vis-a-vis "traditional" programs. Researchers might also refine the data-gathering techniques needed to elicit meaningful information about what goes on in programs. This need for refinement was especially evident in the interviews conducted with the students, because of the limited critical analysis heard from them. It was also found that the students generally responded more critically and substantively when the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with the researcher. To put the student at ease in such a situation, however, requires a trusted staff member to explain the interview in advance.

The process of tape-recording, reviewing, summarizing, and editing the data from the nearly thirty interviews was a very time-consuming one. When this time was added to the commuting time involved and the occasions when informants arrived late or missed an appointment, each case study proved to require a great deal of time. This time factor was one of the primary reasons that the total number of cases was limited to six. (See Appendix F for a schedule of site visits conducted for the case studies.)

Programs using a participatory approach might borrow from this research process when doing evaluations to demonstrate their effectiveness to outside funders. These programs might also adapt this methodology for internal, formative evaluation purposes.

APPENDIX H

METHODOLOGY USED FOR ANALYSES OF ORIGINS, LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS, AND KEY ISSUES (CHAPTERS V AND VI)

The final two chapters were intended to serve as a summary of the origins, limitations, strengths, and key issues which had emerged from the experience with learner participation practices identified in the preceding chapters. While Chapter V was to serve primarily as a place to summarize information provided by sources in the field, Chapter VI was to provide an opportunity for the researcher to add his own recommendations to those provided by other observers of the learner participation scene.

Methodology for Chapter V. Chapter V was a relatively straightforward summarizing of the origins, limitations, and strengths of the participatory practices identified by the same sources which had provided the basis for Chapters II, III, and IV. In particular, the more than forty informants interviewed for Chapter III and the more than twenty informants interviewed for Chapter IV provided the bulk of the information for this fifth chapter.

That information was pulled from the notes taken for each of the interviews as follows:

1. The notes for each interview were reviewed for information related to the notions of "origins," "limitations," and "strengths." Each of those pieces of

information was transcribed onto a separate piece of paper, and those separate pieces of information were then compiled into three separate envelopes marked, respectively, "Origins," "Limitations," and "Strengths."

2. When all of the original interview notes had been reviewed and relevent pieces of information sorted in this way, the respective envelopes full of information were then examined in detail. This examination led to the identification of key origins, limitations, and strengths, which were in turn presented in the text of Chapter V.

Methodology for Chapter VI. As in the case of Chapter V above, the notes from each of the more than sixty interviews were reviewed to identify the recommendations which the sources had made related to future development of learner participation practices. The informants had been asked to identify what they felt needed to be done if the uses of participatory practices were to be improved and expanded within the field.

The pieces of information provided by each of the informants were transcribed onto separate pieces of paper and then sorted according to common themes and elements. The researcher at this point incorporated his own perspective into the process, in his determining of the order in which the recommendations were presented and in the special emphasis he placed on some recommendations which he found of relatively greater importance. The researcher found that his own recommendations on the subject overlapped considerably with those provided by the informants. This was probably due to the fact that the informants were largely a "select" group of observers who, like him, shared an active interest in developing participatory practices. The resulting chapter is in this way a product of a blending of various points of view on what needs to be done in the field as filtered through the researcher's own personal perspective on the subject. This synthesis of recommendations was then presented in the text of Chapter VI.

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